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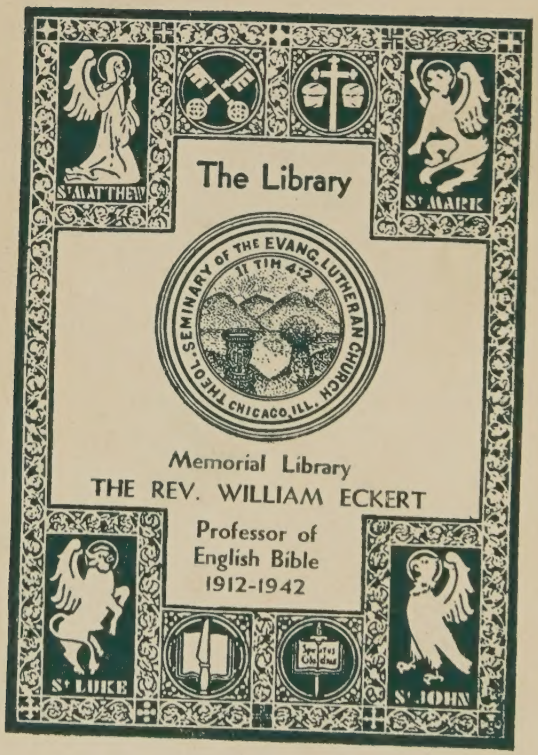
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WORDS OF KOHELETH

ECCLESIASTES

WORDS OF KOHELETH

Son of David, King in Jerusalem

TRANSLATED ANEW, DIVIDED ACCORDING TO THEIR LOGICAL CLEAVAGE, AND ACCOMPANIED WITH A STUDY OF THEIR LITERARY AND SPIRITUAL VALUES AND A RUNNING COMMENTARY

BY

JOHN FRANKLIN GENUNG

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1904

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Published September 1904

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TO

GEORGE A. GORDON, D. D.

LOVED AS FRIEND, ESTEEMED
FOR HIS WORK'S
SAKE

PREFACE

If a single word were sought, to denote the spirit in which this volume has been written, the writer would lay claim to the word *constructive*. As distinguished from the purely critical, which latter spirit so dominates our age, this may be figured in simple terms of position and direction. The critical spirit, taking a station outside the subject of study, looks over into it with the eyes of a spectator, noting the results of a process in which it has not shared, and passing judgment by a standard of history or dogma or philology already made. Its direction, by the very fact of being critical, is essentially opposite to the creative surge and current of the author's mind; it reduces his fervors to a residuum of reason; it imposes a dispassionate measure on what is to it a finished result; its besetting tendency is to leave the work cold and obsolete, or analyzed out of life. The constructive spirit, on the other hand, quickened first to living sympathy, takes its place at the centre of the work itself, whence the radiating lines of thought and feeling stretch out in vital motion, seen through the author's eyes and realized through his glowing

soul. Its endeavor thus is, virtually, to create his work anew on his own pattern; its direction is one with his; it has at heart the same goal of truth. Such spirit by no means ignores or slights the critical; rather, it takes the critical in, on its way, as an outfit of insight in which also the author himself is concerned, and in whose light the problems historic, dogmatic, philological, or whatever else, assume the proportions essentially their due. Thus its criticism has become a thing organic and functional, a structural element of the tissue itself.

The remark so often made of Biblical study nowadays, that it is time to quit tearing down and to begin constructing, applies with especial force to this Book of Ecclesiastes. Itself initially a work of reaction and stricture, its critical strain, its negative element, lies on the surface; so salient that popular sentiment draws its allusions and points its morals from it. "As bitter in the mouth as a page torn from Ecclesiastes," is the way a recent writer characterizes a certain modern book. At the old sage's opening note of vanity and disillusion men, it would seem, have stopped short; have been too shallow and heedless, perhaps, to go on to his solution. The very idea that there *is* anything positive and constructive about the book must needs, if asserted, accept a main bur-

den of proof. And yet this constructive strain, this positive tonic uplift, is the controlling and surviving element. It resolves all the discords, makes the dark and turbid run eventually clear; offsetting vanity by substance, the factitious by the intrinsic, agnosticism by a solid asset of certitude. The whole book, it is herein maintained, exists supremely for the sake of what is positive and affirmative in it, for the sake of the better structure it would build amid the ruins of a baffling world. It is in its large effect an uplifting power, not a disintegration. That this is a traverse of the prevailing popular notion, the author of the present volume is not unaware; with confidence, however, he would invite the candid attention of readers to his detailed presentation of it.

To find whether this is so, and how far, may seem, perhaps, a complex matter, in view of Koheleth's extremes and cross-currents; for the book is undeniably a repository of thoughts as stubborn and contradictory as the thoughts of Nature herself. And yet it is no mysterious thing, nor does it require special pleading, when once we are rightly launched on the central tide of his thought. It calls upon us merely to hear him out, giving due weight to all sides and colorings of his plea. It is, in fact, like all deeper problems of life, an affair of relation, balance, continuity, propor-

tion, or as may be more simply stated, an inquiry how the book's various utterances hang together, and what supreme and grounded effect they work. In the light of an age which, almost beyond any former one, is moving in the Koheleth vein, there is need to determine anew, and with unprejudging care, the old sage's emphasis of things. This is what the title-page means by its proposed study of literary and spiritual values. The problem on its concrete side is a purely literary one; literary in that broad and deep sense in which alone the full concept of literature can be understood. To fathom it we must go beyond the *curiosa felicitas* of words and figures, elegances and nuances. We must note how the book derives not alone from its author, but from its age, from its world, from the whole world beyond time and space on which its two millenniums of vitality have laid their power.

It is a large inquiry, as the interrogation of any literature that has centuries of life in it must be. It has also its smaller aspects, problems of connection and relation, workmanship and organic structure. Not all of these need be specified here. Some stress is laid, however, on one element on which more depends than would at first appear, the element of division. What grouping of Koheleth's words is feasible, to answer to the large trend of

the book and to the organic function of every part? There may be divisions that make for confusion; how many such there are in fact is one of the most striking disclosures of the study of works on Koheleth. On the other hand, that there may be a division making for unity and coherence is a natural corollary of treating the thought as in its large result homogeneous. For this reason it has been deemed an important matter, not unworthy of note on the title-page, that the book be divided according to its logical cleavage.

Of the massive constructive idea which has gradually emerged to clearer view in the study of this volume, which has revealed Koheleth's mighty hold on the very citadel of manhood, and imparted to every step of the study as it were a sense of consecration, there is no need here to speak. It is best disclosed not by assertion, but by the momentum of Koheleth's thought; and if in some adequate degree candid readers may come to realize it, in its true scope and power, the writer desires to reckon it all to the account of that archetypal Volume from whose pages new light is continually breaking.

Amherst, Massachusetts,
April 19, 1904.

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I

WORDS OF KOHELETH

STUDY OF THEIR LITERARY AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

"The vast, profound thought that brings with it nothing but sadness is energy burning its wings in the darkness to throw light on the walls of its prison; but the timidest thought of hope, or of cheerful acceptance of inevitable law, in itself already is action in search of a foothold wherefrom to take flight into life."

Maurice Maeterlinck.

"To believe in immortality is one thing, but it is first needful to believe in life." — *Robert Louis Stevenson.*

STUDY INTRODUCTORY TO THE WORDS OF KOHELETH

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK, AND ITS WORLD

I

WHEN, in the intolerant old Puritan days, some other-minded soul had the courage, or effrontery, to "speak out in meeting," the instant wave of sympathetic response from back seats and galleries, braving the frown from the pulpit, betokened that though one man alone had taken the risk of giving his conviction utterance, in the reactive conviction itself, as it had mutely gathered head and bided its time, he was not alone. He was a spokesman. From that moment, and for that hitherto silent class, his words, whether he would have them so or not, were the initial point, if not of a party, at least of a tide of sentiment. Souls that before had been torpid and unresponsive, prisoned as it were in an uncongenial order of things, now thrilled to the unwonted note, as if the signal had been given

The arrival of a new conviction and its sequel.

for the doors to be opened. It was as when in a chaos of foreign voices men catch the sound of their native language, and rise to heed and follow.

Koheleth's impress on the ages, as it were speaking out.

Among the works of Hebrew scripture, this Book of Ecclesiastes, or as from the outset we had better call it, Koheleth,[1] has always made upon the world the strange impression of speaking out in meeting. It reads like an irruption into some too self-complacent or too dogmatic age; there is about it, too, the same note of audacity and independence, the note, so to say, of a soul unconformed. Further, it has had the same touchstone effect; a source of more or less disturbance to many, while it has drawn out into response its own congenial following. On the one hand, it has in every age encountered the bewilderment, not to say suspicion, of the orthodox and devout; who have been at loss to account for the presence of such a book in the sacred canon, and disposed to apologize for it now that it is there. The reason for this is not far to seek. The book is not in the conventional religious vein. Its insistent charge of vanity,

Whom he has mystified and disturbed.

[1] So, without attempting to translate the name, I deem it better to designate the unknown author. The word Ecclesiastes, the Greek translation of Koheleth, entitles what is of all scripture books the least ecclesiastical; and its English equivalent, The Preacher, denotes one who of all Hebrew writers is the least clerical.

directed as this is to all points of the compass, and its resolute agnosticism concerning futurity, could not but be a discord in the general chorus of psalm and prophecy and godly counsel on which the religious spirit thrives; it exhales an atmosphere in which all that supports the heart on the heavenly minded side suffers a touch of frost and disillusionment.

Whom he has attracted.

On the other hand, and by no means a reassuring fact, Koheleth's heartiest following has been gained from the back seats and galleries. He has delighted that remnant of unclassed thinkers and deniers, already a suspected element, who too frankly love him for the enemies he has made. One never hears of the skeptics rejecting this book. It seems rather to warm and nourish them. Renan, the chief posturist of the skeptical school, gives fair expression to this equivocal reception of it, in his remark that it is the only really charming book ever written by a Jew. What so charms him the whole tone of his own work helps us to divine. He reads into it something of his own elvish, ironical spirit.[1] Most things Hebrew present themselves to him as things to disparage and satirize, from a point of view, or rather an animus, essentially alien. This book, from whatever cause, awakens in him a re-

[1] A partial illustration of this is quoted on page 296 below.

sponsive chord. And for spirits that consort with his, spirits with some indictment against the universe, or with eyes mainly for its seamy and turbid side, the book has always had an extraordinary attraction; it seems to draw into its orbit the unreconstructed, the minority element, the odd natures, everywhere.

It would be exceeding our warrant, of course, to judge Koheleth merely by the company he keeps. That pessimists, deists, epicureans, agnostics, or whatever unholy set has found his vein to their liking, should be taken as his unit of measure, is of the same logic as would reduce David to the dimensions of the motley crew that gathered round him at the cave of Adullam. His book has already suffered much, no book in the world more, from just this type of estimate: expositors, for the most part apologists instead of sympathizers, taking the too convenient way of labeling it with the name of some school and putting it into a pigeonhole, classified rather than read and heeded. This takes us, however, only a little way, and that way misleading, because it leaves out all that is vital. To name Koheleth's fit audience is by no means to penetrate his secret.

Koheleth not to be judged merely by his dubious clientage;

Yet, on the other hand, not to recognize some equivalence of involution and evolution, not to take

due account of that peculiar strain which endears the book to the off side, would be to miss what is most distinctive in it. Here is an utterance that strikes, so to say, the fundamental note of those dubious classes to whom the religious world has given hard names; that propounds and perhaps solves the problem of life in their idiom. Whatever it is to the saintly and orthodox, to them it is clearly of tonic and upbuilding influence. It gives them voice and vision, allows for their data, makes their cause heard. Unless, as holding them utterly perverse, we deny them the right to exist, we are bound to consider their and Koheleth's common point of view, and see what there is to legitimate their attitude and temperament in the spacious House of Life. It is a question, after all, not of names and labels, but of truth. Koheleth has drawn these strange comrades, nay, in some of our moods he draws us all, into his orbit; the world of every temperament has its Koheleth hours, when with all the unction of conviction it cries, "All vanity — what profit?"

nor yet to be separated from them.

May there not be, then, some point deeper down where these dark elements and the more hopeful and courageous ones meet and are true? That there is such a blending-point, that Koheleth opens the way to it by contributing as it were a needed minority

The deeper point of convergence and reconcilement.

report, assuming toward life and the world an attitude which, though supremely sane and sound, the conventional religious consciousness has been slow to understand, — this, I believe, justly sums up his significance for the centuries. Through his eyes men hitherto conversant with the devotional or theological approach are made to see, with delight or dismay according to bent, a distinctly new coloring and proportion of things.

II

What, then, is this attitude of Koheleth's, — which in one utterance can with the pessimist reduce the whole human career to dust and vanity, with the agnostic refuse to see immortal light beyond, yet with epicurean good cheer bid man eat and drink and rejoice in his portion; which, with all its sense of disillusion, yet steadily counsels the sanity of wisdom, the sagacity of righteousness, the readiness for judgment, the fear of God? A balance-sheet of life this, which eliminates many deeply cherished things, yet when all is reckoned is made to foot up even; a pathway at first sight strange and devious, which yet reaches the same heights of duty and vision. Is this, then, as critics nowadays are trying to make out, a doctored-up attitude, the composite resultant of a discord of authorships

His attitude identified broadly with the scientific.

and moods; — or have we here one consistent body of thought, one homogeneous portrayal in which, the key once found, life active and reflective takes on tone and depth and soundness, making "one music as before, but vaster"?

The kind of data to which he is amenable.

To this latter alternative, it may as well be said here, the present study is unqualifiedly committed. There is no adequate or even respectable reason, in my conviction, for assigning the book before us either to more than one author or to more than one fundamental impression of life.[1] In its pervading spirit, in its literary value, in its essential lesson, the Book of Koheleth is an organic unit. So much of our case may be given away at this stage. If the critics are judging otherwise, it is because they are on a wrong, or rather a superficial tack. For

[1] This needs to be said here, perhaps, not by way of controversy as if it were a forensic affair, but because critics of name and note nowadays are going off in tame docility, like so many sheep, after opinions made in Germany, which assert — to use Professor Siegfried's words — that "it is impossible that the Book of Koheleth, as it lies before us, could have been the product of one mind." My answer to this, conducted steadily through the divisions and notes of the appended commentary, is like Webster's answer to Choate in the famous case of the twin car-wheels: "There they are," he exclaimed; "look at 'em!" There the book is; look at it, fairly and realizingly; that is all that is necessary. Look also at the fuller account of Professor Siegfried's exposition, and at the estimate of some later English ones, pages 162–167 below.

this, by way of data, must be premised: we do not get at the real Koheleth by burying our noses in a Hebrew grammar, or by running his thought into moulds left over from scholastic philosophy. We do not reach his limit, much as we are undeniably aided, even by burrowing into the history and ideas of his day. He so strikes out from his age into the timeless and boundless, that to get his large measure we must enlarge our world. We must look at his thought in the setting of a universe and an eternity; just as men to-day are learning to look at things in cosmic terms, in terms of stellar spaces, and world energies, and vast tides of evolutionary life. As soon as we project his conception of being against the background of that roomier universe which is coming into the vision of our latest century, we find, with a feeling hardly short of amazement, that he must have shaped his thought, whether with full consciousness or not, to much the same setting.

Largeness of the claim for him confessed.

To premise this is to make for Koheleth a claim so large that we must lay a deep ground for it. And first by beginning at his essential attitude to things.

Whatever contradiction of moods or views it may contain, the book reveals one unitary trait as a constant spiritual quantity. It is keyed throughout to the note of sturdy honesty. Kohe-

leth, looking forth with intense sympathy on a puzzling world, reports not what he desires to find in order to make life easy, but what must be owned in order to make life forthright and true. He trusts not to what he can read *into* the world as the logic of some dogma or system, but only to what he draws *out* of the world as tested fact. Moving thus in the domain of the actual and verifiable, he stakes out for man a way of living calculated for this concrete existence under the sun, — or perhaps we should say, for an existence intrinsic and timeless, — rather than for some state of being yet future or some theorized environment elsewhere. For such a man, to confess vanity of that which yields no essential result is merely a phase of honesty; and equally so is his agnosticism toward that which in present limitation of being cannot be apprehended, and for which present life has no occasion. His quest is for the view of things in dry light, without haze or mirage from subjective vapors within.

His ground trait of loyalty to fact.

Here, surely, is an attitude to which our modern age is no longer a stranger, whatever the times may have been once. For this is nothing less, nothing other, than what we call the scientific spirit: that straight-seeing, judicial, matter-of-fact disposition which,

Identified with the scientific spirit.

as distinguished from the bent dogmatic, or speculative, or devoutly credulous, craves its due rights alike in a well-equipped world and a well-furnished individual manhood. Such an attitude finds its own comradeship. Others may tolerate Koheleth, or try to reconcile themselves to some disturbing strain in his argument; it is the men of scientific sense and temper, by whatever good or bad name they are called, who move congenially and without friction in his vein.

This scientific spirit long misunderstood;

We know how reluctant has been the welcome accorded by the ages to this scientific spirit. It has had its full share of odium for looking out fearlessly upon the world and daring to search and question. Its refusal to make its judgment blind, its propensity to weigh and verify, holding all questions of life open and not assuming beyond the data, has been inveterately misjudged as the outflow of a wicked heart; to tenderly pious minds it has seemed like a disposition to pick at the universe in order to find pretexts for evil. Hence all the opprobrious names that from age to age have been thrown at it. Hence the fatuous idea, so headstrong and bitter, that a warfare was necessary, or even possible, between science and religion.

It looks now, though, as if to make up for its long repression and eclipse this hardy spirit were tak-

ing an overwhelming reprisal. The stone that the builders rejected is becoming the head of the corner. The supreme intellectual movement of our age is moulding, as by a cosmic fiat, the ideals of all provinces of thinking, the religious equally with the rest. Here is how a recent writer, calling it "the central current in the literature of our time," defines its attributes:[1] "If I am to find in one word the chief bond between these minds, with their different ways of work, I should name the great business of our time, science — yes, science! But it is not the crude transference of physical images or theories to matters of life and character that is meant. The spirit of science is seen in the region of art by a particular temper, by openness of vision, by the determination to exhibit reality and to hope for just so much as may be expected, by the bold use of such hypotheses as can be brought to book, and by the steady temper that has

but in our day coming to its own.

> "'power to fright
> The spirits of the shady night.'"

A far cry this from the thought and temper of men, even of thinking men, a century ago, to say nothing of the earlier repressive days from the Puritan times backward.

The religious thinking, equally with the rest,

[1] Oliver Elton: *Tennyson, an Inaugural Lecture*, page 16.

I said, is shaping itself to a scientific model; and this has given it a tolerant as well as a fact-craving spirit. We are coming to realize that even toward the sacredest outlooks not all minds can move in mystical vein, not all can stifle questioning before the absoluteness of oracle or dogma. If these temperaments are necessary to salvation, then salvation is not a universally available boon. For there have always been some who, in seeing and thinking for themselves, must give reason the right of way, and trust only to verifiable fact, and run the risks of honest doubt. Only so can their souls move in freedom and joy. Until in some hospitable scheme of the universe these can find welcome and citizenship, they must remain in their back seats and galleries, an inert element, awaiting the voice that shall speak out for them. And now, thanks to the revolutionizing scientific movement, their day of welcome, one may even say their day of dominance, is well upon us. Their claim and sentiment, gathering silent head, have at length so changed the molecular structure of things, that now the scientific temperament, the scientific attack and measure, no longer stigmatized as infidelity, is legitimating itself as a sane and by no means irreverent attitude to life.

How it has entered the religious thinking.

As a true exponent of this scientific spirit,

Koheleth is for all the centuries the pioneer, the pathfinder. The traits just attributed to our age accurately describe him. That "determination to exhibit reality and to hope for just so much as may be expected" is what the new strain of his thought, so reactive and bold, yet issuing in so much that is sound and wise, reduces to. The verdict that he pronounces on life human and cosmic is the verdict of a scientifically poised mind which has probed the world of his time, gauged its resources to their bound, and sternly held himself to such conclusions as are amenable to verification. If his verdict turns out to be authentic, then it is demonstrated that scientific judgment has place, alongside of prayer and doctrine, in a sacred canon; that the scientific mind, resolutely ignoring supernatural or transcendental assumptions, may yet win to a real vision of the truth of things.

Of this scientific spirit Koheleth is the pioneer.

Here, however, we are brought up against the crucial question which has caused all this doubt over Koheleth. *If* his verdict on life and the world is true, — all depends on that. It does not look like the priestly or prophetic verdict; seems in fact to traverse it. Does his pronouncement on life, then, justify his attitude? That scientific attack of his, that note of first-hand observation and inductive

The findings of the scientific spirit, as made by Koheleth.

caution, is all very well; we like to see it applied to microbes and extinct saurians. But if in the end he has *observed* the erroneous thing, if in the lack of some rectifying spiritual sense he has been color-blind, seeing only vanity where there is substance, only an ever-returning wheel of being where there is progress, only a blankness of future outlook where there is vision, — why, then his science is at fault, it has not saved him. Perhaps in making such sweeping assertions he has fallen on a problem too large for a natural or biological sense to tackle. If so, not Koheleth alone, the findings of the scientific temper and procedure, as embodied in this their pathfinder, are on trial. Can a man, with the common sense and caution, reporting on life according to what his eyes see and his unmortgaged judgment weighs, be trusted to report true? Such is the momentous question at issue.

Koheleth's world, and what data he had for his verdict.

To answer it in Koheleth's case, we must interrogate his world, the broad world of manhood life as it lay spread out before him. We have to consider what data of his day and land, what coloring and limiting conceptions of things, were available for his induction. It has indeed always been the same world, with the same manhood powers stored up in it. But men's vision of things has had to

grow, as they explored their manhood in steps and stages. A revelation of larger reaches of being presupposes eyes to see and spiritual impulse to appropriate. Until these inner capacities are grown, a world of sublime realities, all around the soul and perhaps all the while acting upon it unseen, may be virtually non-existent. And so elements of life which in our riper day are luminous and full of motive may once have lain in twilight gloom.

This last-named fact we need here to premise on account of the historic advance that has been made between Koheleth's time and our own. Since he looked out upon the world, a great clarifying and emancipation of the human spirit, so great as to have revolutionized the cosmic consciousness and created a new era, has been revealed to the world. A later thinker asserts that in this great event there was brought to light nothing less than life absolute and rounded, with the first clear vision of immortality. To all this, which of course we must here eliminate, we must reckon Koheleth's relation. He lacked something which we have. By the broad evidence of history his verdict fell in an unfinal dispensation, a twilight period, wherein certain cardinal data of manhood life, and perhaps the supreme key to it all, had

What intervening history compels us to eliminate.

2 Timothy i. 10.

not yet become a power in the world's mind and motive. If, then, some of his judgments are sombre, or if on some problems to us very vital he must only say we cannot know, we may but have reason, on testing his words, for admiring his honesty all the more; for his world, with its range and limitations as interpreted in the cosmic consciousness (for this is what his pioneer utterance of the scientific spirit connotes), his verdict of things may turn out to be unescapably true.

III

The environment on which Koheleth passes judgment.

In what manner of world, then, what pervading moral and spiritual atmosphere, did Koheleth's realizing imagination move? Some of the broad traits of Hebrew history about two centuries before Christ, when we suppose his book to have been written, will perhaps furnish us a sufficient clue and background. We may chart out his environment somehow thus: —

"The night of legalism."

Long after the heroic age of Hebrew history was past, when even prophetic fervor and insight had subsided, and the Jewish national spirit, already bowed by exile, dispersion, and foreign tyranny, had further submitted itself, under a hierarchy of priests and scribes, to the austere dominance of Mosaic law,

there ensued, until the coming of Jesus, a period of about four hundred years, which has been aptly termed "the night of legalism." [1] It was the epoch in which, among all classes, life, labor, worship, had become a prescriptive thing, dictated by codes and their interpreters; and the so-called Mosaic or Old Testament dispensation, of which, obedience to law is the keynote, was at that fully developed stage where, one may say, its testimony was all in, ready for the verdict which some day must come to reveal what it really amounted to. Out of the middle of this period it is, as it were out of the very midnight of legalism, that these words of Koheleth come to us. They stand, then, just where we want the verdict of the cosmic consciousness. They are in a position to join with evolutionary science, as we have come to accept it, in reducing the interpretation of life and the world to the common denominator of law. Whether this law is expressed in Mosaism, or in the broader code

By Professor A. B. Bruce, in his Apologetics.

Probably about 200 B. C., in the time of the later Ptolemies.

[1] "That dark night which came down upon the Jewish Church when it slept for four hundred years, and awoke, and arose, and found itself Christian. Even the dreams of such a time, the troubled moanings of such a weary trance, we may turn aside to look upon with a fearful interest. . . . These years were a time of deep and inward development." — Davidson, *Biblical and Literary Essays*, page 3.

of the laws of being, is quite immaterial; it is the recognized reign of legalism and the general sense and feeling thereby engendered, — how the human spirit thrives, so to say, in such a habitat and atmosphere, — for which we interrogate Koheleth.

Little if any suggestion the book seems to have of legalism, if we are thinking of law as administered by scribe and priest, or as glorified in the song and ritual of the temple. If, however, we think of the spirit of law, as it presses from above on the human soul and as the human soul responds, we find Koheleth showing the very age and body of his time its form and pressure. He defines the situation, alike Mosaic and cosmic, as it is matured and established. So it was, we say, that the manhood spirit must have felt, when the consciousness of universal fated law, enveloping it like a heavy atmosphere and getting into nerves and blood, tinged the tissues of life and colored the whole creation. It is not an age alone, but a dispensation, that is here sized up; and the book, like an invading voice speaking out from back seats and galleries, is as it were the soul of the pre-Christian world become audible, making spiritual assessment of the whole case, just when it can best be realized how much and how little a régime of

The book pervaded by the pressure of legalism.

triumphant legalism can do. When, therefore, it asks, "What profit hath man in all his labor?" the question is forced not from a casual writer, but from a whole race.

The depressing first result of Koheleth's world view.

The first and deepest result of Koheleth's criticism of his world is depressing. It has to be so, from the only data available to him, because he has no reason for viewing the dispensation of which he is participator and judge as other than a finality. To see to the end of one's world, to have reached the point where there is nothing beyond, cannot but be a pain and disillusion. And this just describes Koheleth's feeling, as he comes to comprehend his universal dominion of law. It makes it all the graver to have discovered that law is a thing of nature, a thing cosmic as well as Mosaic. For even if you burst national and ecclesiastical bounds, the world into which you emerge is no larger. The same prisoning limits hedge you round, and when you reach the end and look back, it is all vanity.

Its monotonous self-recurrence and lack of progress.

As it lies there before him, then, this law-enslaved, labor-weary earth, with its futile enterprises, comes to his vision like nothing so much as a kind of prison treadmill. It is a closed and completed circuit, a monotonous round of things returning always on itself, never pushing farther, or contain-

ing promise of outlet into a larger sphere of being. For man, too, as for the ongoings of nature, this is so. The next generation appears, and treads its appointed round as does this; the fated order grinding out for them the same cycle of ordinance and duty, duty and ordinance, an interminable routine, as if the race of men were eternally to be children or slaves, moving only at the dictate of tutors and taskmasters, with no initiative of their own, having all their standards of life made outside and imposed upon them. What it amounts to, when all is summed up, is a vast wheel of being, with nothing new under the sun. The greatest lack, in labor and nature alike, is of what he calls profit, — literally, surplusage, residuum. When the round, whatever it is, is run, there is nothing left over, no new thing added, to make the next turn of the wheel an advance on this. This is the central count in his indictment of his dispensation: it has not in it the principle of life, increment, progress to a far event. And the fact weighs on him heavily; it is what produces the undeniable gloom and austerity, the immense pathos, of his book.

Proem, ll. 6-31.

Proem, l. 3; Survey i. 67; ii. 21.

Nor is it alone the deadly monotony of it all when the world has taken its pace that so pains him. There is some alleviation to the poignancy

of this. To be wise and understanding, to have eyes in one's head, is something; is in fact as superior to doltish apathy as light is to darkness. Like Lucretius after him, Koheleth was not without his sense of *Suave mari magno;* he derived joy from his insight, though it opened a view into a futile world. But even this wisdom and joy, at the very next step, meets a limit seemingly impassable, and all the more baffling for the spasm of cheer it has roused. There, at the point where all vistas of life converge, sits the Shadow feared of man. "I know," Koheleth says, "that one event befalleth them all. And I said in my heart, As is the destiny of the fool, so also shall it befal even me; — why then am I wise beyond the demand?" Here, then, the prison-house, closed before, is double-barred. In a cosmic dispensation which by returning ever on itself betrays the fact that its evolutionary potencies are exhausted, suddenly, with no discrimination, no balance of accounts rendered, there comes the inevitable shock, like the descent of a knife, and wise and fool, man and beast, all lie in the dust together. It is a thing explicable neither to wisdom nor to the teleology of law. With the event of physical death the whole gyrating turmoil reveals its essential vanity. Is this the end?

Nor this alone, for this has some alleviation, Survey i. 64.

Survey i. 79.

Survey ii. 57; v. 115.

Is it *not* the end? Who shall bring man to see what shall be after him?

Such, then, is Koheleth's indictment against the world's order of things as he sees it. It is not a matter of an age or a country; it is concerned rather with a whole stratum of manhood. In his tremendous field of vision dates and epochs disappear, as it were absorbed in that calendar wherein a thousand years are as one day. He is passing judgment on the highest conception of life that has yet been brought to light, measuring it as far as a scientifically tempered mind has eyes to see. No prophet or priest can really *see* farther, however he may conjecture or infer. This is not saying that there is no higher conception, no clearer vision, yet to come. As a matter of record, the bringing of life and immortality to light, with the agency by which they were revealed, is associated with a later era. For Koheleth and his generation, however, that era is still centuries in the future. What he is sadly aware of now is the terminus, the worked-out vein, of the old order: the life barely sufficient for uses of this world, with no surplusage apparent, the immortality not clearly in sight at all.

Koheleth's indictment summed up.

IV

A meagre result this doubtless seems, to us who have so long been familiar with the immensely enriched conception of manhood and its destiny which has grown out of the supplementation of the law régime by the empire of grace and truth. It is like a reduction to rudimental terms. And yet, if we will reflect, it not unfairly sums up in dry light what the Old Testament ideal of life, for all its wealth of legislation and prophecy and fervid song, has in its final balance-sheet to offer. Let us see if this is not so. The worshipers, gathered from their toil and worldly projects, are bowed in the Temple, and the priestly choir is chanting, "Thou wilt show me the path of life;" — what, then, in matter-of-fact terms, is that path?

Comparison of this verdict of Koheleth's with the Old Testament ideal in general.

A goodly and noble one, to be sure: the way of the law, righteousness and integrity and mercy and wisdom; its rewarding goal, length of days, children, wealth, comfort, honor; its dark alternative, destruction and shame. Truly, this is the law not of Moses alone, but of manhood being, from which no jot nor tittle can pass. If there had been a law given which could have given life, if life inhered in law at all, this would be its expression. The Old Testament

The Mosaic law the true law of manhood;

ideal of righteousness, on its stratum of being, can neither be improved upon nor superseded.

but limited to the uses of this world.

But just as St. Paul perceived afterward, so men of light and leading in Koheleth's time are beginning to discover that the operation of this programme of life is bounded. It is, after all, a programme for only one world. Its utmost length of days comes finally to a stop; its rewards of wealth, honor, family, — to say that these can neither be counted on as certain nor appease the soul when obtained, is to confess that they are essentially a vain thing. The stamp of the finite and futile is on them all. And by those who to their piety add wisdom, this is coming to be seen. Koheleth has merely spoken out what is the misgiving of many a clear-eyed soul. The most enthusiastic eulogist of the prevailing law régime, the poet who composed that magnificent acrostic to glorify the dispensation of Mosaism, is after all constrained to say, "I have seen an end of all perfection, — though thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Psalm cxix. 96.

Lack of outlook toward a world to come.

And while thus the limitation of things is coming to be discovered in the realm of the seen, the soul that craves outlet, drawing near the frontier of the unseen and asking, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

receives no clearly articulated answer. We know how reticent the Old Testament is about the nature or even reality of a life beyond, and we wonder why. It really has nothing authentic to say. Having reached in conception only so far as is involved in a self-returning round of manhood law, it has not yet mounted to that summit whence over the horizon immortality comes into view. We must rise higher than Mosaic ideals to apprehend it. Not that immortality was not yet a fact, or, as Dr. McConnell seems to think, was not yet evolved: if ever a fact at all, it must avail from the beginning. The question is rather of conceiving the fact as it is, or as later scripture puts it, of the coming of immortality to light. And the answer, for the era we are considering, is, that the ideal of life itself was not yet evolved to the point where an immortality worthy of the name was visible. The law-conditioned life is in the nature of the case a closed circuit. It puts forth no feelers, so to say, toward a larger sphere of existence. Vague hopes, sighs, aspirations, conjectures, are indeed not lacking to the Old Testament — such streaks of dawn, in fact, as herald a coming sunrise; but all they can image beyond is some realm of nerveless shades, some dreary survival of a soul crippled by the loss of its body, or in later days some refuge of Abraham's bosom.

Job xiv. 14.

And this is only a dream, not a support of character, not a source of motive and assured action.

The Old Testament worthies, in fine, centred their spiritual energies in a life just sufficient, so to say, to hold its own and fulfill its present-world function. It does not seem to have sufficient overflow of vitality, sufficient surplusage — to use Koheleth's term — to create a demand for another and higher sphere of being. They have indeed done nobly as far as they have gone; have evolved rules for their daily guidance, customs and statutes for their nation, sacrifices and liturgies for their worship; but as yet no stately furnishing for a life to come. And the defect lies in the essence of law itself, which can rise no higher than its own level. For a sphere higher than mere survival or wages or judgment, men must first evolve eyes to see and a spirit to appropriate; in other words, they must grow a new manhood. So we may say the Mosaic dispensation, as regards life and immortality, is at a deadlock. It is bound fast to earth by the lack of that highest touch, that surge of faith, initiative, adult spirit, which, as it is the essential principle of life eternal, creates the demand for and vision of it.

The Mosaic deadlock.

A dispensation which has become an established order, with its developed usages and with the care

of souls on its hands, is naturally slow to own its limitations. To point these out, in however loyal spirit, has the inevitable effect of skepticism and impiety; it is speaking out in meeting. Yet, if such limitations exist, the world, the established order itself, cannot afford not to know them. It is the invaluable service of Koheleth to his era, speaking out as one bound to no system of prescription, and with a sharpness of note which compels attention, to have pointed out where the virtue of the Old Testament programme of life ends. He has dared to say the harsh word that was needed to warn men from false hopes. And thus he has reduced the essential meaning and reach of his dispensation to such factual expression as the whole mind of man, the part which searches and questions as well as the part which devoutly accepts, can lay hold of and apply to life.

Koheleth's invaluable though ungracious service to his era.

V

That from his available data the creation is made subject to vanity, — cosmic life a treadmill round, which never forges on but returns evermore to renew its appointed task; mankind caught in the same vortex, coming into existence, laboring, dying; the whole failing to reveal that element of

Connection of Koheleth's thought with the findings of evolutionary science.

surplusage which, needed in the world's affairs as a sinking fund to progress, would in manhood life be as it were a surge toward the freedom of a higher range of being, — this basal idea of Koheleth's, so out of tune with religious yearning yet so unescapably true, is not only of the spirit but in the observed field of science; which, in fact, through its doctrine of evolution, furnishes the calculus by which on the largest projection to reckon the orientation of our book. We are here on modern ground, the ground of the higher biology.

Koheleth's world at the end of an evolutionary period.

To put the case in present-day terms, we may say that what Koheleth observes in his world, that worked-out vein of an old order, is to be interpreted as the end of a vast evolutionary period in the development of manhood. By the fact that the wheel has come round full circle, with no new thing under the sun to show for its revolution, that period betrays its exhausted potencies. There is no further advance in this direction. If manhood is to rise to yet higher things — and how can the evolution stop here? — it must be by responding to a new principle, by striking out a radically new line of progress. This seems obvious. Meanwhile, however, the new era is not yet in sight. Man cannot see what is to be after him, either in this world or in the next. All he can

Survey ii. 70; iv. 43.

see is, man and beast drawing the same breath, fulfilling their similar routines of function, and dying just alike. Preëminence of man over beast is there none, of wise over fool, none. Neither by being wise nor by being a man does man seem to have accumulated such surplus to his capital stock of being as to give claim and basis for a renewed career beyond. He has not yet discovered what to make a future life out of. Except as a mere question of survival, then, an idle vaticination or speculation in psychical research, the idea of immortality, to one in Koheleth's era, is barren of significance. There is no vital zest, no sinew of motive in it. The only way to make it a living issue is to reveal a larger sphere of being. There must be seen and accepted a life worth survival, a life whose will it is to lay hold on eternity.

Survey ii. 59.

It is from just this higher spirit of life that the eyes of Koheleth's era are holden. Manhood is not yet aware of the inner powers that coördinate with immortality. Describe them to him as they are afterward revealed, and like Nicodemus he will say, "How can these things be?" He stands indeed on the frontier of a new evolutionary era — his ability to limit and close up the old is evidence of that; but until the gates swing open,

The new era not yet apprehended.

Cf. John iii. 3, 9.

it is as sealed to his conception as is the human to the animal stage, or the protoplasmic to the chemical. No wonder, then, that Koheleth confesses ignorance of what is to be. To be agnostic is for him simply to be honest; and to have emphasized that agnosticism, in the interest of a greater life value, is his untold service to his age.

As thus oriented, Koheleth's book plants its lesson of life squarely on the basis of the higher biology. By the side of the lower or animal biology it takes its place, seeing eye to eye with it, and pronouncing the same verdict. Both give the findings of the cosmic consciousness as it looks out over the vast unitary field of existence. Both see the multitudinous life of the world as it moves in obedience to mysterious and fated laws of being. Both, exploring life as they see it to the utmost margin, are modest enough to feel and courageous enough to say that the data for further knowledge have given out. Their tracts of observation differ, that is all; or rather we may say, taking their stand at different strata, different heights of being, they define the cosmic situation each from its own landing-stage.

Koheleth's book a chapter in the higher biology.

The lower biology, with its microscopes and test-tubes, contemplating the basal stratum of material life, traces its vital pulsations from the

protoplasmic germ up through plant and animal to man, on through all that is animal in man, a steadily ascending course of organism and function, still onward as life throbs in man from birth through maturity to old age; until at length the vital motion which began away down in the plant dies out of the human tissues, and the body sinks back into the realm of the inorganic. There, where the cycle returns on itself, the horizon of physical biology is bounded. Its prospect stops as short as if the whole evolutionary current ended there. Its microscopes and test-tubes have done wonders, but their work is over. There is nothing in body or brain, search as we will, to prophesy survival of conscious life beyond. If such prophecy there be, it must come from some higher stratum of manhood being. All that we can see from this height is a complex process of material functions traversing their law-appointed course of birth and growth and maturity, then returning gradually into themselves, then ceasing altogether. Perpetuated this process indeed is by reproduction, but not clearly improved upon, and never accumulating a sinking fund toward abolishing the debt of death. Too evidently this material chapter of evolution is a closed circuit; and as thus it comes back evermore to its starting-point, it leaves no outlook open

Sketch of its parallel, the lower or material biology.

beyond itself. The animal man, as such, has not reached an eminence of being high enough to afford a view over the horizon into another existence.

Koheleth's higher biology as compared with it.

Koheleth stands higher up, surveying a more comprehensive landscape. His biological tract takes in all that field of being wherein man, responding to his environment, lives his life as under the pressure of a will imposed from without, — the will of heaven, of the state, of social, industrial, hereditary conditions; all, in short, that is implied in the large régime of law. The atmosphere of Mosaic legalism all around him has engendered his peculiar realization of things; still, he does not differentiate between Mosaic and cosmic, natural and moral; does not mention law at all. It is a thing too pervasive to mention, too universally felt to permit even the conception of existence outside the sphere of its working. Nor has he any disposition to rebel against or evade it. None the less one can feel, through the sensitive spirit of Koheleth, what is the cheerless climate, what are the imprisoning bounds, of a law-enslaved world. The triumph of law, as it appoints to everything its function, is, after all, the triumph of a task, a routine; the very order and calculability of its course dizzies the free spirit like the

turning of a vast wheel. And what is thus revolved on itself remains within the limits of its own orbit, a self-completing cycle of potencies. In any domain wherein not spiritual initiative and self-moved individuality but environment and an external will impose control, the being so governed is imprisoned in its environment. So far there is no preëminence of man over beast.

Here, then, just as in the material stratum of life, the evolutionary circuit is a closed one; and if there really exists in manhood a prophecy of immortality, it must come from a table-land of being higher up than the level of mere subjection to law; must for its *raison d'être* reveal a sphere of survival other than is demanded for the rewards, or the penalties, or the eventually perfected justice, that a sovereignty of law connotes. All these adjustments, as we see, are merely in the orbit of earthly being, are the wage or requital that coördinates with earthly deeds. If these were all that is beyond, why, then, the other life would be merely set in the key of its past, would be the mere obverse and complement of this; whereas the unspoken want of the human soul, if its appetency for immortality is awakened at all, is an immortality that leaves this earth behind and goes on to ever-rising newness of life.

As barren of outlook as the other.

What that more exalted sphere is to be, what its motive and working principle, how the impulse of the coming era shall wreak itself on life, Koheleth knows as little as does his generation. He is not a prophet, but only a hard-headed scientist; he cannot soar as on poet's fancies to see the far event. One thing that he does see, however, right before his eyes, is really the next thing that needs to be seen, and as it turns out, it contains the potency of the whole solution. I refer to that discovery already mentioned, the discovery that the life he observes is lacking in *yithrōn*, profit, surplusage. "What *yithrōn* hath man in all his labor?" he repeatedly asks; and repeatedly he places before his reader some alternative wherein this or that procedure has the *yithrōn*, or brings him up short at some *cul-de-sac* of life where *yithrōn* is not. What shall we make, then, of this key-word of his philosophy?

How Koheleth proposes not the solution but the next step toward it.

Doubtless the discovery, in which every wise soul will echo Koheleth, that when a man gets what he works for, however glorious or remunerative, it turns out inevitably to be no reward at all, does not satisfy, was what put him on the track of this inquiry, "What profit?" From this he comes to see that there is really nothing outside of life

How this lack of yithrōn rises out of man's work.

itself that can possibly be offered as payment, as a cash equivalent, for it. If this holds good at all — and no experience can gainsay it — it must hold good in any and every sphere. It is not in the nature of things to put up the allotted work, the developed aptitude, the supreme interest and power of one's life, in the market for pay. If life cannot be its own reward, there is nothing else to barter for it. We can see what a blow this idea of Koheleth's strikes at his environing standards of legalism. Suppose a man who has rigorously fulfilled all the commands of this state of existence going to another world to get his wages, — what could possibly pay him off there, what that he has not taken with him? There is nothing for it but to get his reward as he goes along, if he gets it at all, and that not in some foreign equivalent, but in the very thing itself.

From this the idea goes deeper still. Looking from the laboring man to the laboring world, Koheleth becomes aware of that vast recurrence of activities and functions always repeating themselves, and he sees how fatally like that is all the human life his law gives him data for. What surplusage, what original individual thing to show, as the smallest achievement of the free spirit, when once the wheel has rolled round? He is seeking anxiously, and

How it applies to life and the future outlook.

cannot easily find, some net result, some noble increment of life, to answer to the tremendous outlay it represents. In the bounded field before him the potencies that are in sight are all exhausted in the struggles and achievements, the dues and ideals, of this world. Like an engine wherein all the motive power is used up in making the machine go and none is left for productive work, so here in manhood there is, so to say, just enough vitality to serve the requirements of this earthly sphere, and none to spare. As Koheleth sums the situation up, it is all vanity, vapor, amounts to just the breath that is used in keeping alive. In other words: in the stratum of being that he contemplates, the wealth of life is not abundant enough to overflow its present environment and demand another sphere for its exercise; has not reached the vital exuberance, the spiritual masterfulness, whose logic is immortality.

Owning ignorance until there are organs to know.

The practical first step onward from this negative view of life is taken in no way so effectually as by simply owning the situation and adjusting one's self to it. Koheleth's agnosticism, which is the expression of this attitude, is merely that sturdy good sense which will neither water its capital stock nor deal in speculative values. What further steps he takes, steps of positive upbuilding, — and they are neither

few nor unimportant, — will come out in succeeding chapters. Meanwhile it is something to recognize that before immortality can come in sight, life itself must be enlarged and enriched; that there must be a new surge of power and initiative. The heavenly province, which must be other in character rather than in space or time, can be annexed only through a spiritual overflow which, having formed the soul within to a higher model and motive, until it has gathered irresistible head, bursts forth to enter on its own domain. Until this highest manhood impulse comes, the outlook beyond can have no basis more tangible than dreams and conjectures; existence being eventually pressed back, in spite of its eager energies, to the fellowship of the fool and the beast.

Koheleth's disposal of his Old Testament dispensation.

In thus sizing up his dispensation of legalism, Koheleth puts a period to it, so to say, as a stage in the evolution of manhood, and shelves it away, along with the animal stage, among concluded and outworn issues. It is not pleasant thus to reduce a cherished order of life to zero. This first criticism of his world, as has been said, is depressing. It has to be stern and sweeping, perhaps; concluding all under vanity that it may open a more substantial way of life for all. Nor does the question, What profit? wholly miss its sufficing answer. Even the

night of legalism, with its heralding stars, may have its songs in the night, and their melody will not be depressing.

At the watershed between two spiritual eras.

Here Koheleth stands, then, at the end and beginning of things, at the watershed between an old and a new era. Of the new he has no vision as yet, no premonitory thrill of what its vital glory is to be; he sees only the routine world-order in its times and seasons, bringing to every man his portion and to every purpose its occasion. Meanwhile, if his verdict is true — and in its marks of truth it shares with the verdict and spirit of science — he has done the world incalculable service in warning it where the boundary is, and how thankless were the attempt to work the old manhood vein further. To have defined the situation thus is already to be beyond and above it; he has secured the foothold wherefrom to take flight into life.

CHAPTER II

KOHELETH'S RESPONSE TO HIS TIME

A SALIENT characteristic of Koheleth's thought is its pervading mood of reaction. This it is which imparts to his book its audacious note, already dwelt upon, as of one who speaks out in meeting, to the dismay of the orthodox and the unholy delight of the freethinkers. When, however, we inquire just what it is, accurately, that Koheleth is in reaction against, the answer is not immediately at hand. He is not here to scatter chaos and doubt over the orthodox establishment, in state, church, or scripture; has no quarrel with things as they are. Of all these, with their good and ill, he takes fair account, moving in their atmosphere and bearing their burdens. Nor is his book of that carping and occasional character which we associate with reactions; it urges on its age no left-over truth, as it were a marginal gloss and emendation. Rather, reopening the whole case, it aims from its undictated point of view to see life steadily and see it whole. Nor again does the book, in the po-

Koheleth's book evidently a reaction; but against what?

lemical or perverse spirit of many a reaction, commit the soul to any doubtful issue of life. After all its dim and devious circuit of thought it reaches a familiar old stopping-place, landing the reader by a natural sequence in that soundly righteous position where the soul, fearing God and keeping His commandments, is left ready for the scrutiny of a coming judgment. Obviously some of the pious misgivings that have gathered about the question of Koheleth's influence may safely be dismissed. The skeptic of whatever name, whom his views are presumed to abet, may, if he duly heeds the sage's directions, turn out to be no very depraved person after all.

Our study of Koheleth's recognition of his era in the previous chapter has left him, like Matthew Arnold after him, —

> "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born;"

and his austere acknowledgment of the situation, which many have misread for pessimism, is undeniably saddening. To look this prison-house existence of ours in the face, aware that it has announced its end and that the old manhood vein is worked out, is not a restful state of soul; it leaves too much of our nature in protest. It has, however, its compensation, perhaps in the very protest itself; for it secures

Result of previous orientation of the book.

a foothold wherefrom, as the way opens, to make escape into a freer air, a larger era, or failing this, to make the best of that which is. The latter course, in any event, is the nearest-lying duty, the way of wisdom in scorn of consequence.

But though by no means unready to welcome a new era, should such be revealed, Koheleth is sane and sturdy too; his scientific temper stands him here in good stead. He will take no false step forward; his flight into life must be something more substantial than a flight of fancy. Just here it is that his reactive mood focalizes; not against what is already in the age, ordained and established, but against something that is in danger of coming in, some tendency or wave of advancing sentiment which before it is granted free franchise must be rigorously assessed and corrected. Just here, too, in the spirit he would maintain against this, emerges, buoyant over all negations, a tonic quality, in a strain so strong and wise that the world ever since has been at loss whether with the theologians to call Koheleth's book the most pathetic in scripture, or with the hardy worldlings to call it the bravest and cheeriest.

Concentration of his reaction on the tendencies, rather than the facts, of his age.

I

Comparison of Koheleth's words with what we know of Jewish history reveals little evident concern of his with public affairs and events of his time, hardly enough, indeed, to enable us to determine even his century. With the thinking of his time, however, with its general atmosphere of sentiment, feeling, spirit, if we could enter into this, we should undoubtedly find him intimately engaged. His book is not without indications of such regard, plainly legible between the lines; indications the more noteworthy because it is out of some such face-to-face encounter with his generation, one feels sure, that his tonic reaction and perhaps the very emphasis of his agnosticism come. Only, it is from beneath or rather inside his thought that these indications reveal themselves; from the passion, the animus, of the man.

Koheleth's concern not with public events but with the thinking of his age.

Exploring his pages, then, for some revelation of his state of mind, one of the most striking things that we note is his antipathy to fools. He misses no chance to score them. The feeling seems to have passed beyond the calm tenet of his Wisdom theory into a kind of personal grievance. And of the various aspects of folly that irritate him, there

Koheleth's antipathy to fools, especially to wordy fools.

is none against which he so often inveighs — going out of his way to do it sometimes — as the folly of vapid and voluble talk. He writes as if the air around him were vocal with this; as if some inundation of silly babble were sounding in his ears like a dreamy confusion. "As cometh the dream in the multitude of care," one of his maxims runs, "so the voice of a fool in the multitude of words." Something there is, it would seem, in the diffused reverberation of his age's talk, which disturbs his sense of what is wise and sane, some much discussed notion, perhaps, which, if not to be condemned as wrong, yet merits the treatment accorded to things light and useless. What is it?

Survey III. 66.

Two noteworthy passages, in both of which he encounters this wordy folly in the same way, may perhaps contain a clue. In his Fourth Survey, wherein he has just been facing the measure of man's fate, he goes on to say, "For that there are words many, multiplying vanity, — what profit therefore to man? For who knoweth what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth like a shadow? For who shall report to man what shall be after him under the sun?" Again in the Sixth Survey, where his contemplation of the general efficiency of wis-

Two passages in which the specific cause of this antipathy is betrayed.

Survey IV. 37.

dom has suggested the contrasted bootlessness of folly, and especially of the speech of folly, he says, "Then, too, the fool multiplieth words; — though man knoweth not what shall be, for what is to be after him, who shall tell him?" In both these passages, it will be observed, the countering doubt that Koheleth interposes to the spilth of words is his skeptical question about what is to be; as if the folly centred somehow in voluble twaddle about future things. Nor are these strictures merely casual; whenever his thought calls upon him to look beyond this world and this life, it is apt to become intolerant and heated, as if there were connected with the problem some disturbing element, some fallacy.

Survey vi. 69.

Are we not justified, then, in thinking that Koheleth's *bête noire* of vapid talk was connected with current discussions of futurity, — some phase, perhaps, which was imperiling the good sense of a subject that needed careful handling? At just about this epoch, as we know, the doctrine of personal immortality, a late Hebrew growth, was finding its way from the esoteric theories of philosophy into the common mind. We have no means of tracing the details of its history; but we may be sure that whenever the idea became a general topic of discussion, its effect must have been far-

Related apparently to current views of immortality.

reaching and profound. From the fascination which the same idea has exerted in modern times, in the various deep or shallow exploitations of it, we can in some degree realize how it must have fared in the exuberant energy of its nascent state. It would be the pasture-ground of endless speculations and theorizing: notions such as Koheleth calls in question in one of his allusions, of the gravitation or levitation of spirits animal and human, or perhaps the shadowy conceptions of theosophy and psychics. It would be just the domain for a riotous Oriental imagination to thrive in: constructing airy heavens and hierarchies, or germinating into the grandiose imagery of that body of apocalyptic literature whose beginnings we trace to this era. A great awakening the new doctrine must have caused, whenever it became naturalized, as it met the cravings of the Jewish spirit for an emancipated future, cravings so much the keener for the long snubbing that the people had suffered from baffled national hopes on the one side and a stern Mosaism on the other. Here to the ardent Hebrew soul was offered a way of escape from the hard austerities that encompassed it; and all the more alluring because the hopes it created were so legitimate; it broke no law, it concealed no subtle impiety.

Survey ii. 62.

All this, however, as the eager discussion reverberates in the air about him, is to Koheleth only so much idle talk, the garrulity of fools, as it were an empty fad and fashion. This is his treatment of the doctrine, or at least of the phase that it is assuming in his age — to unearth its essential lack of fibre. He brings against it no prophetic spirit of denunciation, no priestly warning of endangered law or custom. Prophet and priest, in fact, with whom he has no quarrel, are doubtless contributing to make the new doctrine a prevailing sentiment, an orthodoxy. His is rather the minority report of the Wisdom spirit, and perhaps of only one strain of the current Wisdom at that; for the Wisdom of Solomon, coming into Jewish literature at a period not long after, and reading like a veiled answer to Koheleth, squarely maintains immortality as a philosophical truth. Koheleth, it would seem, stands out almost alone, exponent of the scientific and cosmic sense; not to say that the doctrine is untrue, but that it is unprovable. You do not really know anything about it, he virtually says; you are dealing in cloudland fancies, your philosophy lacks substance. What you need, what the nature of the thing requires, is not imagination to picture and speculate, but eyes to see; — "Who shall bring man to see

How Koheleth punctures the shallowness of the current idea.

See above, chapter i. p. 9.

what shall be after him?" He meets the question, in other words, in just the temper that has been ascribed to our latest age, "the determination to exhibit reality and to hope for just so much as may be expected."

Such temper is not to be condemned as narrow, merely because it is cautious and demands evidence and verifies; it is just as likely to coexist with unmeasured openness of vision, only it sees more deeply, too. It confronts the popular movement with the instinct of a disciplined, conservative sense; the conviction that this is not a thing to accept blindly, that in a question of such tremendous import one had better go slow and be sure of his ground. So in the warm enthusiasm of his time Koheleth has to assume the ungracious attitude of a reactionary and old fogy, interposing such counterweight of criticism as he can while the wordy current sweeps past him. Radical as he reads to us, he really gives voice to the conservative old Hebrew spirit, clear-eyed, steadfast, drawing strength and safety from what the ages have proved good; as one of his maxims puts it, "Though in a multitude of dreams and vanities and words many, yet fear thou God."

Koheleth the representative of the older Hebrew spirit.

Survey iii. 80.

II

It is generally held, though the proof is necessarily vague, that the doctrine of immortality, with the tone and sentiment it imparted to life, came into the Jewish mind and nation by way of the Greek philosophy. Things look as if it were the outcome not primarily of religious fervor or of logic so much as of a certain relaxed and self-pleasing sentiment, and as if Koheleth's animus were against the whole strain and attitude of the contemporary spirit. Assuming this to have been the case, we seem to read between his lines, and especially in what may be called his fighting ideas, what spirit of reception that Hellenizing influence had, and what balancing-up or correction it needed.

How Koheleth reveals the reception accorded to the Greek idea of immortality.

There is first the appeal it would make to the pace-setters of floating opinion, the men of leisure and social position, the frequenters of the temple courts. This appeal it is, doubtless, with the lively discussion it rouses everywhere, which sets Koheleth in such uneasy mood at the wordy folly all around him. It came, one may imagine, in some such wave of sentiment as we often see pulsing through society and drawing

As it comes to the social leaders.

Compare Survey iii. 57-82.

out the quidnuncs. It was not really a wave of deepened thought and wisdom, for these classes are not the thinkers but the talkers; rather it was a kind of spontaneous adjustment of life to the superficial effect of the new idea. Enough, men would begin to say, of these legal austerities checking and chilling the soul at every turn with their everlasting Thou shalt not, and their inflexible threat of retribution and judgment. Let us give this sunnier Greek spirit its due, laying aside restraint and foreboding and taking the good of life as it comes. The human spirit is not tied to animal laws; it is ethereal, it will mount to its own realm of splendor. There was awake in the land, especially among the genteel classes, much of the spirit which Koheleth-Solomon assumes and reduces to a residuum of vanity in his enterprises of building and pleasure; and this spirit would thrive on the image of a Greek Elysium. It was, we may say, the esthetic side of life asserting itself; and to the well-nigh starved Jewish sense it must have exerted a powerful popular attraction. Nor was this Hellenizing movement without its profound influence on Koheleth himself. We shall see in the sequel what an enlargement of life it left with him; he does not, indeed, so much condemn it as make practical and discriminating assessment

Compare Survey II. 55-66.

of it. Its disposition to limber up existence and make life livable is in fact an essential in his own quest of the chief good. He takes its effects, but arrives at them in a different way.

The flaw that Koheleth sees in this side of it.

For to one in whom the native Hebrew austerity is so deeply rooted, this speculative wave, with its luxuriance of vaticination, has all the unsubstantiality of an exotic. It does not grow out of that Hebrew soil which ages of precept and psalm and prophecy have fertilized. As the first and fatal flaw it lacks basis, lacks grip on the motive powers of life. It transfers life from the practical to the esthetic and visionary, is moving in the sphere of a self-pleasing fancy. So when it comes to pronounce on the splendors of a life beyond this world, or to shape the conditions of such existence to tangible form, it is projecting its imagination too far beyond its base of supplies. Its

> "words are only words, and moved
> Upon the topmost froth of thought,"

words which, as they are bandied about in the chatter of discussion, may as well be treated according to their inherent lightness, and relegated to the keeping of fools.

The fighting idea which Koheleth sets, or rather which already stands immovably, over against this

popular dream of futurity, is that ground conception, already analyzed, which gives his whole book its deep pathos; interposing the huge inertia of a cosmic order, an evolutionary era. It is the confession that the light of eternal life is not yet above the horizon. Reduced to lowest terms, it is after all a very plain scientific principle translated into the idiom of life. You cannot push human destiny, it virtually says, any more than you can raise water, higher than its source, its vital principle; and the source of this new-fangled exploitation of immortality is no higher, has evolved no more inner resurgence, than manhood had when all it could prognosticate was Sheol and the weakling shades. The splendor of the end must already lie prophetic in the strength of the hidden springs. To say that this speculation lacks basis of verifiable fact is to say that it does not proceed from an underlying core of intrinsic character. It is from this basis, always from this bed-rock of the intrinsic man, that Koheleth insists on casting his horoscope of life. Looking out from this basis, this popular vaticination is not what scientific insight demands, not the masterful outrush of the manhood spirit seeking its fit environment beyond: not that, for no stirrings of the age or of the human heart, no uprisings of surplusage, no overflow of spiritual vitality,

The principle that he sets against it.

warrant that yet. No; this movement is merely the ebullition of an idle figment, kindled by a strain of exotic speculation, trying to image a future world without first providing a soul fitted to inhabit it. To one who is looking for a city that hath foundations this does not meet the deep logic of things. It is getting forward too fast to take the solid values of life along with it. So in interposing his trenchant agnosticism Koheleth is really giving utterance to a more grounded faith. He is putting on the brakes, asserting anew the lapsing traditions of wisdom and piety, laboring to make the eager explorers around him content to waive discovery of future worlds until into the ken of a wealthier manhood there swims a planet better worth discovering, a larger existence prognosticated not by dreams and fancies but by fullness of life. After all, it is not so much the seeing that signifies as it is the developing eyes to see; the vision is ready when the eyes are, and large according to the largeness of the man.

How Koheleth wrought to save the Old Testament life from evaporation in vain philosophy.

Such, in my view, is the meaning of Koheleth's reactionary indictment against the spiritual tendencies of his time. It goes deeper than merely stemming the current of a new-fangled doctrine. There is more in it, too, than checking a too empty fad of speculation. For it comes in most

timely to save the Old Testament ideal of religious life in its magnificent integrity, forcing it past the quicksands of a vain philosophy along the line of its own healthy development, toward the energizing faith of the era of grace and truth, that Messianic stratum of manhood from which alone life in its fullness and glory is visible. They also serve who only stand and wait; and in Koheleth's time waiting may have been an especially needed virtue. In the glamour of its new Greek ideas, the Jewish world may well have been perilously near leaving an authentic revelation for an esthetic luxury of fortune-telling and apocalyptics; and so it may have come to the verge of committing its religious hopes to that unsubstantial speculative support which has divorced so many religions from the practical demands of the life that is. If this was so, or in the degree in which it was so, then just these words of Koheleth had a mission which, in the odium that attaches to negatives and censures, we are too apt to undervalue. The last thing that would occur to us, perhaps, would be to discern in Koheleth anything even remotely Messianic; but if in the psychological moment when some wise voice was needed to warn men against shallow and fallacious ideals Koheleth met the occasion and thus wrought to keep the way clear for a higher realization of life, can we deny him a momentous

share in the large preparation for the fullness of the times?

III

Another appeal of this doctrine of immortality there was, which Koheleth could not dismiss so scornfully. That was the appeal it made to the sterling religious heart, which as by an instinctive affinity would accept and naturalize the theory of a life beyond as a welcome solution of this life's problems. Come it from Greek philosophy or from whatever source, the doctrine would so meet a craving and so justify itself that by the predominating consensus of the nation it would soon be a Jewish tenet, divested of all color of heathenism. It was by no convulsion, but rather as a truth whose arrival is expected, that it became a part of the orthodoxy of Judaism.

Origin of the spiritual movement that eventuated in Pharisaism and Sadduceeism.

Still, the initial working of it, the nascent state of the quickening idea, must have been intense. We wonder that it left so meagre survival, in literature or in some identifiable movement. Was it not, however, largely on the stimulus of this very idea, with its tremendous sifting power, that there began to work the inner convictions and sentiments which not many years after Koheleth's time we find hard-

The movement as rooted in temperament and bent.

ened into the sects of Pharisees and Sadducees? At some time in this legalistic dispensation two strains of thought began to deposit themselves as from a solution, strains representing different attitudes of temperament or education toward the unseen, and so essentially contrasted that in St. Paul's time the Sadducees stoutly denied resurrection and spiritual existences, while the Pharisees confessed both. So divergent an effect sets us looking for an adequate cause. It cannot be all political or worldly. It must be sought in the people's heart, at a depth greater than is revealed through rabbinism, or state exigencies, or priestly aristocracies. All these go with the effects, not with the inner predisposition. What cause so likely, when we come to think of it, as the divergent attitudes assumed toward the idea of immortality, approached by the devout and imaginative on the one side, and by the worldly-wise and matter-of-fact on the other? The active and the contemplative, men of the present and men of the future, these represent a temperamental classification which manifests itself in every age and in every movement. As the new doctrine took shape, it must have been, on some such cleavage line as this, a powerful touchstone of hearts. Men could not help taking sides; for even to let one's self remain content with the old ways

See Acts xxiii. 8.

and the seasoned standards of life, while the new movement sweeps by toward its unexplored goal, is to take a side.

It is the trenchant idea that Koheleth brings to bear, with the defect or fallacy that it unmasks, which makes us think that here in his book we have a glimpse of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism in the germ, following the direction of an unforced temperament and not yet exposed to the heat and rancor of controversy. At the same time the sweep and absoluteness of his plea reveals his conviction that the issue is no light or idle one; men must not let themselves drift here, they must hear all sides, they must define their position.

How Koheleth's plea uncovers germinal ideas.

Let us see what there is to bear this out.

Under the name of Hasidim, pious ones or saints, a class of people who may be regarded as initiators of the Pharisaic strain begin to be mentioned at just about the time we assign to Koheleth and the Greek influence. They were not a sect, and never became one; they represent merely a trend or cult in Jewish life, being such devout observers of the law as are singled out for eulogy in the First Psalm. To attribute to these an imaginative or mystical temperament would suggest a trait more absolute than there is warrant for. It

The initiators of the Pharisaic strain, and their attitude toward futurity.

is only in a relative sense that the Jew can be called an imaginative being at all. But as giving more play to the devotional, meditative side, these Hasidim would doubtless, of all the nation, respond most warmly to the doctrine of immortality; translating it, however, from the sensuous and esthetic to the clear-cut concreteness of their law. Thus, with a large and eventually controlling class, the doctrine came in to subserve a purpose not merely esthetic but useful. It furnished a realm for the requitals of life: rewards for the righteous, retribution on the transgressors, a general balancing-up of accounts. It opened, in other words, a convenient sphere for the sanctions of their universal moral law.

What tendency Koheleth sees in this.

Just here it is that Koheleth sees the unspiritual tendency and meets it. Postulate a setting to rights not here but beyond the grave, and the temptation is strong to make up this earthly existence with mere reference to it; to postpone the deepest interests of life till then, or to be careless of failures here that may be retrieved yonder, or perhaps to make the central principle of this life a cold-blooded investment of merits with a view to future gain. In short, make a system of future rewards and glories a motive, and it draws into its current all the thrifty commercial side of man's nature, the side

which calculates profits, and records the aims of living in a ledger. We can think how quickly a people like the Jews would discover this, and how eagerly a nation whose hopes and fears were all embarked in their Mosaic law would grasp at the chance to make that law with its eternal sanctions a paying investment.

Of course it took years of unspiritual scribism and rabbinism to vulgarize the doctrine to this extent. There would always be against such brazen barter a secret revolt of shame. But something like this, after all, correlates not unnaturally with a régime of arbitrary law; the desire of gain, the dread of loss, the calculation of chances, in some form, clings to all its promise of the future. It is just here that Koheleth reveals its vulnerable point, in that cardinal question of his, "What profit?" and in his wholesale reduction of men's aims to "vanity and a chase after wind." Make up life with reference to profit, to pay, to any kind of cash equivalent apart from the life itself, and your expectation is doomed. Follow it into whatever line of work or achievement or success or glory you will, even with a king's resources to help you, and you find no residuum of gain. Nay, there is no surplusage of life itself, if all that life means is bondage to a cosmos of law; the law of

The fighting idea, or doubt, which Koheleth sets against it.

the spirit of life is not yet revealed. Thus, coming again on that idea which on its world side is so infinitely sad, we find it on its practical side employed as an incitement to noble strength. By closing the avenues to the external in every direction, Koheleth forces the life inward upon itself; compels it to be its own reward, its own excuse for being. The question with which he probes the motive of the new doctrine reduces virtually to this, What is that thing reward, for which, as nothing yields it here, you are flying to another world? And what would be the value of an immortality which, instead of opening an inconceivably higher state of being, seems to exist to no end but as a paymaster to settle the old scores, or as a scrubbing-maid to clean up the soilure of this state? You must get a better ideal of reward than that; must give up the thought of living for pay at all. It is thus that he uncovers the weak spot in the popular movement, in his warning sense that the doctrine of the future, in unwise hands, may be whittled into a paltry thing. And the vehemence of his agnosticism is a pointer against the pettiness, the spiritual scheming for gain, from which he would save his awakened age.

In his cool-headed, unpietistic, this-world temperament, as contrasted with those more zealous

dispositions which are on their way to Pharisaism, Koheleth may be regarded as the nursing-father of the Sadducees.[1] We think of his practical sagacity and scientific poise; of the analytic sense which realizes that the inundation of words and the making of many books around him are not increasing the sum-total of insight and wisdom; of his resolution to stick to what is sound and solid in life and let the problematic and nebulous go. Yet with all this sober sanity we note his ready alertness, on his common-sense level, to "see what is the good thing for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life." This is not Sadduceeism as yet, for it is not yet congealed into indifferentism and negation; it is, however, the Sadducaic bent and attitude, in that still healthy state which reveals it as primarily a reaction against the *Schwärmerei* of unbased imaginations deeming themselves piety. And all Koheleth's book is the programme of good judgment and livable life, which is the outcome of this attitude.

Koheleth a representative of the Sadducaic temperament.

Survey i. 33.

Of the two tendencies thus revealing themselves

[1] "Probably the nearest approximation to their [the Sadducees'] religious attitude known to us, is to be found in the sceptical 'Preacher' of the Book of Ecclesiastes." — Bartlet, *The Apostolic Age*, page xxxiv.

between Koheleth's lines, it is doubtless well that Pharisaism afterward proved the more vital strain. It was better adapted, in the fierce struggles that ensued, to keep the heart open to things unseen, to preserve the finer spiritual susceptibilities from atrophy. And if in some things it forced its zeal too far, making its loyalty to rabbinic law a hardness and despotism, — well, it is easier to prune a too luxuriant growth than to graft life into dead wood. It is no small distinction for a sect even the "most strait-est" to have left, when all allowance is made for spiritual shrinkage, a Saul of Tarsus as product. The Sadducaic bent, on the other hand, if it assert itself too exclusively, incurs the risk that inheres in every fight for a negation; its triumph is in the end the triumph of worldliness and spiritual inertia. After all, it is merely as a strain in a larger-furnished character, as a regulative balance and sanity, not as a hard propaganda and class distinction, that this bent can be trusted to control in the large evolution of manhood. It must be rather a bridle than a spur. This is how it appears in the book before us. It is a warning of sturdy sense, scientific discernment, asserting the dues of the other side, reaching beneath some too short and easy solution of the problem of life, to grasp a solution that shall be

Balancing-up of the two tendencies.

valid for all time. And though it has incurred the suspicion of the orthodox and conventional, we cannot doubt that it has supplied an essential element to rescue the venerable structure of Mosaism from insidious weakening influences and save it for the solider destiny which the ages were preparing for it.

IV

In this encounter with his time, the intensity of Koheleth's conviction and the directness of his penetration to the roots of things beget an absoluteness of tone and touch which calls here for examination, on account of the misapprehensions from which it has suffered.

Koheleth's absoluteness of assertion, and what it means.

He sees nothing in half light. He puts in no shadings, no vanishing-points, no saving clauses. Every verdict on life lies before us in the absolute issue to which it ultimately reduces. If the enterprise in which he embarks is disappointing, he is not concerned to measure salvage or shrinkage; he announces sweepingly that it is all vanity and a chase after wind. Nor this alone; he makes it merely a particular case under an estimate which applies in superlative degree to the whole world of designs and labors, and makes the *Leitmotiv* of his book

Instances of this peculiar statement mentioned passim.

vanity of vanities. It is not enough for him to say that earthly investments yield discouragingly small percentage; there is no profit under the sun; there is no profit in a life itself that is merely waiting for death or banking on what comes after. He has no patience to look for such shadowy gleams of the hereafter as speculation may suggest; he cuts the knot by asserting, No one knows what shall be. It does not suit his realistic spirit to say the one compensation is to make the present life livable; he reduces life to its absolute lowest terms, saying there is nothing better than to eat and drink and rejoice in your labor. All this coördinates itself with Koheleth's personality and point of view. It is in part a matter of literary style, using the dialect of concentrated results rather than of refined and labored processes; in part an intense conviction and insight which is stung to set forth in startling terms the fallacies to which the ideals of the age are tending. For the rest, the compensations and saving clauses, which are by no means wanting, will in part come out between the lines, but for the most and indeed overwhelming part will rise as the fair and strong and sufficient result of Koheleth's wholesomer point of view. His is a case wherein it is of cardinal importance to keep constant track of the end to which he is steering, the supreme harmony

into which all his modulations and discords resolve.

Here is the place, therefore, to consider his alleged pessimism. I spoke just above of misapprehensions: there has been no more fruitful source of these than has been created by the superficial identification of his thought with that of the Schopenhauer school. It has become one of the unquestioned dicta of criticism that Koheleth — or rather part of him, for critics have taken to carving him up nowadays — was radically pessimistic. The original core of his book, the dissecters assert, was of this tone, the work, as Professor Siegfried expresses it, of a "pessimistic philosopher, a Jew who had suffered shipwreck of faith;" and this Jew made such a dismal job of it that forthwith a small army of glossators, in the interests of Epicureanism, Wisdom, pietism, and sundry other things, set to work to patch up the book for a decent appeal to an orthodox public.[1] Now if Koheleth's pessimism is so momentous a matter as all this, it will not do, of course, to belittle it; and undeniably there are many things in his book

Koheleth's alleged pessimism, and how much there is in it.

[1] For a fuller account of Professor Siegfried's dissection of the book, which the reader is quite welcome to accept if he chooses, and which at any rate has interest as a curiosity of literary judgment, see page 162 below.

which, uncoördinated with their trend and context, *look* decidedly pessimistic. To see how weighty and how controlling this strain is, we must note with care the relative emphasis of things, and the spirit of the man.

The thoroughness of his pessimistic data.

Koheleth faces the worst. We are left in no doubt of that. The pitiless universal round, with its guillotine of death always busy, the crookedness of the times and of the whole organized world, the enigmas of fate and the unappeasable soul, the perversions into which men will push even their supreme endowment of wisdom, — no abyss of evil in all these but is unflinchingly fathomed and its import discounted. Nor does he mince matters in the telling. If any utmost absoluteness of statement can name an element of the case that there is no getting beyond, that is the thing to take into the account. He uses every implication of his assumed personality and royal position to see life steadily and see it whole, evils and all.

The spirit that rises above the facts.

But the question that rises here is, Why does Koheleth bring all this up, and that too in such a robust ringing tone? That is not the way of the dyed-in-the-wool pessimist. Guy de Maupassant grappled with the murky elements of life, and went under. Does Koheleth's stalwart confronting of the worst be-

token a soul beaten and despairing, or a soul self-mastered and victorious? Nay, there is no whining here, no knuckling under. Nor does this buoyant tone come from merely airing a new diagnosis of life. It is not Koheleth's discovery alone, nor needing proof, but an experience that may be affirmed without fear of gainsaying, that every work which looks outside itself for compensation obtains but dust and vanity; that the universe of God's making must be put up on some other principle than toil and wages, investments and profits. The problem does not work out that way; you cannot in any quest of life make it balance up so. But what then? Here, in the centre of things, is a soul that can weigh it all and need not be crushed by it; a soul God-gifted, endowed, if it will accept them, with wisdom and knowledge and joy, with a portion and work all its own, and a capacity of unalloyed contentment right here at home. There is nothing better for man than this. There is nothing in the universe to take this portion away. God himself has accepted man's best work. Why look away from this lot and life, then, to secure some extrinsic reward or escape some extrinsic disaster? That way it is, in fact, that the real blackness of outlook, the certainty of

Survey i. 63; iv. 85; v. i.

Survey i. 125; iii. 117-129.

Survey ii. 67; iii. 126; v. 142.

disappointment lies; there is where to locate your pessimism. As soon as for your life's supreme blessedness you forsake the inner citadel of your soul, or put your soul up in the market for sale, it is all vanity.

The soul redeemed from the power of pessimism.

Here, then, is what Koheleth's pessimism reduces to: a spirit that, while it owns and discounts the worst, opens up a realm of mastery on which the worst, whether in present or future, has no power. It makes a good deal of difference whether you face your environment in a spirit of surrender or in the spirit of victory; whether it is mightier than you or you consciously greater than it. Must we not, then, revise Professor Siegfried's judgment? Instead of being "a Jew who has made shipwreck of faith," Koheleth is a Jew who is making ruins of the too flimsy faith, the too shallow and thrifty philosophy, of his generation.

Koheleth's pessimistic affirmations a point of departure, not a point of approach.

To orient his verdict on life, therefore, we may say, Koheleth handles the terms of pessimism, but is not a pessimist. The point at which his appraisal of life comes to solution is indeed well on toward the opposite pole. The vanity which he so freely affirms, regarded as a cosmic fact, is not a thesis to be proved, as if his final concern were to leave the human soul weltering in a chaos of hopeless-

ness ; it is a reality to be conceded and dared to its worst, on the way to a higher ground, a more solid truth of manhood, which is to be its compensation and antidote. Here, I think, is where the interpreters of Koheleth have made their fundamental mistake. The thirty-eight iterations of vanity have proved too much for them ; what other utterance than that, forsooth, can poll such an overwhelming vote? Accordingly, in all their estimates of the stress-point of his argument, their heads were so filled with the idea that he is proving vanity — as if it needed proof — that the offset counted for nothing, or was regarded as an appendage stuck on by a glossator. In all their divisions of his thought, too, they have taken it as a duty to make every vista end in some hopeless outlook. The question that immediately follows his initial exclamation, — "What profit hath man in all his labor?" — in the line of this same view is interpreted as "eine verneinende Frage," that is to say, an oratorical interrogation equivalent to emphasized denial ; — what profit? as much as to say, or rather bitterly to attest, no profit at all. This is undeniably a part of its implication ; for Koheleth saw a world full of profitless pursuits and fancies from which he would warn his heedless age. But may he not also, in part, have asked the question in order to answer it? That certainly

seems more nearly his object when he asks the same question again in the third chapter; and there an answer is beginning to glimmer into sight. In fact, as he goes on in the sequel to the question, things read increasingly as if, though the first implication was against it, he really had an answer in reserve, which, coming to light in the course of the discussion, would reveal that there is something, call it profit or what you will, something very near home and accessible to all, which offsets the darkest outlook that environment can give. This, I believe, is his real object; and certain it is that the trend of his book, its large sweep and power, culminates in something that no pessimism can invade.

Survey ii. 21.

V

With such compensations as these coming into the field of vision, it is high time to get out of our critical Slough of Despond. These sombre pronouncements of Koheleth's, made with such uncompromising absoluteness, are really his points of departure rather than his points of approach; they are the preliminary veto which he passes upon the fallacious notions of his time and dispensation, before going on to name the counterpoise, the solid yield, of his own ideal of life. The

Leaving Koheleth's points of departure, to consider his points of approach.

point of approach, therefore, the whole positive half of the problem, remains to be considered.

If, then, all that his age is questing for is vanity, with disillusion and bootless expectation at the end of every vista, what *may* man seek, on what stay his soul? If man can know nothing of futurity, or of the scenery beyond the grave, what *can* he know, to fill the void? Koheleth's negations have covered the field so sweepingly that at first thought it would seem as if nothing but a sorry salvage, a meagre flotsam and jetsam of life elements could be rescued from his wreck of worlds. Many have thought so, and made it the prevailing vogue to think so. What motive would there be to live, they ask, without the sure knowledge that in a future existence our good deeds will be rewarded, our neighbor's iniquities punished, and in general the crooked made straight, the lacking numbered? What is there to make life worth living at all, if everything reveals its vanity by ending where it began?

The meagre basis he seems to have left to build upon.

Before we deem Koheleth's positive contribution to life so slender, however, let us hear him out. His tone, while it vibrates with sad sympathy, rings also in no uncertain notes of cheer and courage. He is bringing, too, the matter-of-fact mind to the

It is the man of scientific temper, however, who speaks.

problem; and while the solution may not be so brilliant and showy, it is something to the point if it makes up in substantial fibre, and in the qualities that hold from the surface all the way through.

VI

Let us look first at what looms up largest and has caused most estrangement, his agnosticism. "No one knoweth what shall be," is the way he puts it, "for how it shall be, who shall tell him?" The blunt wording in which he always expresses his denial conveys something of its animus. As we have seen, he is irritated by the murmur of vapid speculation around him, so Greek and esthetic and voluble; he, a man whose mind craves plain fact and reason, whose vision of the future must wait until it can be projected from the insights and the data of the present.

His agnosticism brought up again.

If, then, this wave of imaginative philosophy is ruled out, what has the realm of observable fact to reveal by way of indemnity? Koheleth's tone is not that of a baffled explorer; he would hardly have announced vanity and futility with such exultant absoluteness, if he had returned from his expeditions in life empty handed.

What has he to bring, in ascertained fact, as offset?

Well, as he goes on, giving his heart "to ex-

plore and survey by wisdom concerning all that is wrought under the heavens," there keep coming to view mysterious traits of human nature which as investigator he is bound to note, yet which transcend the idiom of a law-ridden, earth-bound life. For one thing, there is the tyrannous wisdom-hunger itself, a deep unrest, like a kind of obsession, or as Koheleth describes it, "a sad toil which God hath given to the sons of men to toil therewith." What does this mean, if man's life is given only to be tethered to this field of sense like that of an animal? To be sure, Koheleth neither asks nor answers this question; he merely records the strange fact, and commits himself to its prompting. Then again, as he confronts the leveler Death, and contemplates himself lying down in the dust with the fool, he is conscious of having laid out on life a most unpractical superfluity of wisdom; "I said in my heart, As is the destiny of the fool, so also shall it befall even me; why then am I wise beyond the demand?" A hard question this, — what becomes of all this waste of wisdom, life's rarest product? Nor does Koheleth profess to answer it; he notes the anomaly and goes on. Still again he brings up the ever present fact that the manhood soul in this world's range of ideals is a misfit, is never

Some significant traits of human nature noted and recorded.

Survey i. 5.

Survey i. 80.

adjusted to its environment. "All the labor of man," says Koheleth, "is for his mouth, yet also is the soul not filled." So it goes, as puzzle after puzzle emerges from Koheleth's exploration of life. There is in this prison-house of earth a strange surge of soul, as it were the uprising of a giant, to be reckoned with and motived; and if we make nothing by postponing the solution to an imagined future, no more can these cramped worldly confines compass it. We may take Browning's words as an accurate expression, in nineteenth-century words, of the Koheleth spirit:—

Survey iv. 26.

> "I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
> In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
> It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
> Which nowise I account for nor explain,
> But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
> All feelings equally, to hear all sides:
> How can my life indulge them? yet they live,
> Referring to some state of life unknown."

Browning, Pauline, ll. 593-600.

That is it: these mysterious pulsations of human greatness are a cumulative reference, an effort of adjustment, to some state of life unknown. And the burden of making it known, if he so insists on ignoring a solution beyond death, rests on Koheleth.

Nor is he unmindful of the trust. What that state or standard of life is, comes out as clear as

his Mosaic era has data for, as clear as the law-bound character needs in any era. I have reserved his profoundest recognition of the manhood mystery for mention here because I regard it as the key and focus of all the others, as well as the vital point from which his sane vista of life opens. He arrives at it through his description of times and seasons, which description, discovering that there is a time for everything, and that the timeliness of everything is its beauty, leads him to repeat, this time not despairingly, his question of the beginning, "What profit hath the worker in that wherein he laboreth?" From this, as if setting himself to answer, he goes on to say, "I have seen the toil which God hath given to the sons of men, to toil therein. Everything hath he made beautiful in its time; also he hath put eternity in their heart, — yet not so that man findeth out the work which God hath wrought, from the beginning, and to the end." This sets the whole matter of the doctrine of immortality, with its bounds of knowledge and ignorance, on its true plane, and in so doing puts back more than Koheleth's avowed agnosticism has taken away. It brings the supreme solution down, or rather up, to the life

Koheleth's profoundest recognition of the manhood mystery.

Survey ii. 21.

Survey ii. 23.

intrinsic, the life that for its reward and blessedness instead of dreaming of a vague time not now, or of a shadowy place somewhere else, is rather working out the present demands of duty in an energy which consciously derives not of the animal nor of the worldly, but of the eternal. This, then, is what those strange pulsations of manhood greatness reduce to in their occasion and degree, — eternity in the heart, doing its hidden work of shaping life in its own image. Its workings are what Dr. Newman Smyth describes as "the real involutions within present life of future evolutions of man's being." It has reached deeper than intellect, to the sphere of the will and the ordained work. Therefore the intellect, the curious investigating or imagining faculty, can afford to ignore its subtle problems, leaving them for the fitting time and sphere to reveal.

Smyth, Personal Creeds, page 144.

Here is where Koheleth corrects not only his own age's wordy philosophy, but an inveterate misconception of all times. Somehow man has never been able to get rid of the idea that revelation, instead of being what its name signifies, an unfolding of the soul, is fortune-telling; and to this day men are as keen as ever to have their

How this idea of Koheleth's corrects an inveterate misconception.

post-obituary condition mapped out and portrayed.[1] Koheleth is more modern than they; more biblical, too, in the midst of a Bible which in this aspect he has done his royal share to make the sanest book in the world. By the side of his view the philosophizings that so irritate him look ineffably thin and childish. That — he virtually says — is not the kind of eternity to seek, that is not what the mystic throb within us means: not divination of futurity nor disclosure of hidden beginnings; not an insight that greatly transcends the present. But eternity is there, nevertheless; a surge, a pulsation deriving from the permanent and illimitable, and conforming life and work thereto as to an unseen pattern. Not in those tracts of sky, not in the unmeasured stretches of time; the eternity for man is in the heart, which adjusts itself to the all, as the needle, pointing to the pole, adjusts itself to the magnetic energy of the globe. Thus the vital outlook beyond is not left wholly dark. It is revealing itself all the

[1] "Revelation is the disclosure of the soul. The popular notion of a revelation is that it is a telling of fortunes. In past oracles of the soul the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands shall do and who shall be their company, adding names and dates and places. But we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity. An answer in words is delusive; it is really no answer to the questions you ask." — Emerson, Essay on *The Over-Soul*.

while, through what is deepest and most destiny-making in us.[1]

To have defined man's relation to eternity thus is to have put the soul into the realm of the absolute and intrinsic, where the mere question of a change of worlds has very little significance. It makes no difference, other than as a curious scientific problem, what we find out about it; the thing that is of avail, and that makes Koheleth's counsel so sane, is that immortality, in all the substance and principle of it, is made a present possession. In other words, the paramount concern is with the life itself, and in itself, without disturbing reference to time or environment. It is all one life. The soul can discard empty dreams of the future because already the power that rolls

Koheleth dealing with values absolute and intrinsic, on which questions of futurity have no effect.

[1] "It is not altogether true to real life now to say, as we so often hear it said by worldly men, that we know nothing about the future life, and have nothing here to do with it. For the present is potentially the future. The world beyond is at many points of human experience a felt pressure upon this world. We know the future for better or for worse by the tendencies of conduct now toward further good or evil. What gravitation is among the constellations, we know by gravity upon this earth. We have some prescience of our future life after death very much as the child has foreknowledge of possible manhood or womanhood in its child-consciousness of being. Immortality, in one word, is the present spiritual implication of our life. The future life is naturally involved in present life." — Smyth, *Personal Creeds*, p. 145.

on through the future is the power that is moulding its daily character. Instead of waiting for its heaven, or getting it built on some crude sensual plan, it is making heaven every day, secreting it, as it were, according to an eternal vitalizing principle. The rest it can leave to its time and order. Get the soul in true working order before God, wherein its healthy state reveals itself by rejoicing in its divinely allotted work, and it may be trusted to remain so unaffected by a change of worlds; and therefore at the end, when the dust returns to earth as it was, it is enough that the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Survey vii. 41.

Koheleth is true to his keynote. As if determined to emphasize the issue he joins with his time, he can describe life with all poetic fullness and beauty down to the very end of old age; but just there, where his contemporaries' imaginings begin, he stops short. Yet with eternity pulsing in the heart, he has more than made up the lack; he has exchanged fancy for vital substance.

How the final portrayal of old age accentuates his view.

VII

Whether he will make a similar compensation in the case of that other point of departure, that absolute concluding of all under vanity, remains now to be seen. It is too much to ask of his era,

perhaps, that his pessimistic strain should be set off by pure optimism; but that he should point his age to a solid meliorism, a *modus vivendi* that may well counterbalance the evils of any age, seems guaranteed by the strong vein of good sense and courage which has thus far characterized his encounter with his time.

Koheleth's assertion of vanity, and the question whether he can furnish an offset to it.

As related to the world's reception of it, this note of vanity and disillusion has fared, in the realm of sentiment, very differently from his agnosticism. Men have been fain to reject the latter; have been reluctant, perhaps, to own how little solid substance, how little real grounding, lay under their too facile dreams. To reduce their world to a final residuum of vanity, on the other hand, they were nothing loth; it was an idea round which cheap emotions could play and pose as vastly experienced; it drew the world-weary, the *blasés*, and men of the melancholy Jacques type. Vanity of vanities has always been one of the popular sentiments of the world, yet never more than half believed. To take it in Koheleth's dead-earnest, absolute spirit, and above all to concede it as the preliminary to something that is not vanity, has been far from the world's superficial temper.

How the world has taken it into the currents of sentiment.

Koheleth treats his generation much as we treat

a man who thinks he has found a road to sudden wealth, — some Mississippi scheme, or some project of extracting gold from seawater. Be warned, we say chillingly to such a man's enthusiasm; there is nothing in your scheme but disappointment. Be wise; it is all vanity, what profit? Koheleth urges in similar manner on his age. *What* is all vanity? we have almost forgotten to ask. It looks as if his cry, at least in the first instance, had a very concrete and pressing occasion. And I think the occasion I have already described was concrete enough. The new wave of speculative philosophy did not spend itself wholly on one doctrine; it threw open all the windows of imagination, and set men looking for some less austere outlet of life, some amenity of beauty or luxury or ease, to satisfy a craving that had long slumbered but was now wide awake. All this was in the direction, not of baseness or degeneration, but of spiritual growth; it must be met, therefore, by wise caution rather than by denunciation; the expanding spirit must be warned and guided, so that its growth might be along sound and solid lines.

How Koheleth's charge rises out of an occasion.

As Koheleth, responding to his first impulse of reaction, seeks in his mind how to deal with this prevalent sentiment, he begins, I imagine, at the fountain-head, where men are seeking escape to

another world. But from the veto he sets on this movement his thoughts go outward, trying one thing after another, tearing away the illusions from all, until he has made a clean sweep, and found the hopes that are centred in this world just as fallacious as the hopes that are centred in a world to come. Not only your dreams of other realms, he virtually says, but the cherished objects of this life, the things in which you embark your soul's energies for profit, turn out to be all of the same disappointing character. The rewards they promise are no rewards at all, and your soul is left as lean and hungry as before. I have tried it, he says, and I know.

The order of Koheleth's reaction.

By the time he is ready to write his book, therefore, the conviction of universal vanity has become such a fire in his bones that it breaks in to the heedless age as his initial exclamation, claiming first vent, so to say, as a truth beyond gainsaying. This by no means indicates, however, that the conviction ends where it began. The very exultancy of its tone, as already said, is against such an eventual welter of gloom. Rather, the clean sweep that he has made is the preliminary to a positive structure of cheer, the *tabula rasa* on which, line by line, he sets himself to write a fairer record.

How the cry of vanity becomes his initial exclamation.

So as he goes on with the detailed account of his induction of life, things begin to come out that have a different look, — survivals of the wreck, as it were, little things perhaps which at first one might be inclined to throw away. For one thing, go however deep he will, there is still the heart within him rising superior to all that it works — or wallows — in; as he calls it, "his heart guiding by wisdom," never becoming the thrall of an environment, convivial or esthetic or sensual. This is surely a fact worth noting. Then again, his wisdom; — in spite of the fact that its discoveries are subject like all else to vanity, he records that his wisdom stands by him, a kind of permanent asset, in the midst of so much that crumbles; as superior to folly, he says, as light to darkness. Even of things all mortal, supposing them so, there is infinite choice; there is the soul discovering and cherishing its life idiom. Yet again, as he thinks over those great enterprises which as soon as they were done and externalized, so to say, were a disgust and a weariness, he recalls that in the working of them out he had keen delight; as he expresses it, "his heart derived joy from all his labor." The joy was not in the thing done, but

How the offsets to vanity come out furtively between the lines.

Survey i. 31.

Survey i. 22.

Survey i. 56.

Survey i. 74.

Cf. Survey i. 63.

Survey i. 60.

in the doing of it; there was something in the way his heart twined itself round its congenial occupation which seemed to have deep suggestions for the solution of the problem of life. It was at least a joy which depended on no exotic, imported expedient; and the fact that it was a joy which sweetened and normalized all the homely functions of life stamped it as the portion to which man is born, the individual gift of God. A universalized joy it was, too; not for kings alone, nor for the leisured and luxurious; not even for those who, wrestling with the conditions of existence, have managed to get on top; but for the staple representative man who has to work for a living. This, when we come to think of it, has brought us far above the quicksands of vanity. Beginning with a question which sought profit to man "in all his labor," Koheleth gradually disengages it from its claim to that profit which he identifies with vanity, and when he reaches the ground whereon all can stand and rejoice together, it proves to be the ground of the labor itself. We are not surprised, therefore, to hear the conclusion at which he not once but many times arrives: "Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own work; for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"

Proem, 4.

Survey ii. 67.

There is nothing, I am inclined to think, that has had such scant justice at the hands of Koheleth's interpreters as this his gospel of work. It has been almost invariably ignored by the side of the eating and drinking with which it is so generally associated. Koheleth has accordingly — or a part of him, in these modern times of critical dissection — been identified with Epicureanism; as if after all his desperately earnest quest for the highest good of life, he had reduced his ideal to praise of gorging and guzzling and what young folks call "having a good time." No book was ever less Epicurean than his. Note the passages wherein he mentions eating and drinking, and you always find a workingman there, a man who can draw up to table with a good healthful appetite, and sleep sweetly whether he eat little or much, because he has found his work, the expression of his plans and his skill and his individuality, and takes it as what God meant him to have, and makes it his own by rejoicing in it. There is nothing better for man than this, Koheleth avers; nay, in the solid and usable sense this comprehends it all.

How Koheleth's gospel of work has been ignored.

Surveys i. 118; ii. 33; iii. 118; v. 92, 140.

Survey iii. 97.

As he puts it in Survey i. 121.

The truth is, Koheleth's blunt absoluteness of tone has again deceived interpreters here, as it did

in the case of his alleged pessimism. He has been regarded as a down-hearted melancholy man, who when he got down to saying nothing is better than to eat and drink and rejoice in work was at a kind of last resort, a *pis-aller*, only one degree this side of nothing at all. But it will be noted that he expresses it so only to begin with, while he is in the heat of his plea against those who are seeking something more congenial or poetic or profitable. It is, so to say, the every-day staple, to which the condiments may be added as occasion rises. He reduces his good to lowest and homeliest, but by that very means to most universal terms. As he goes on, however, bringing his gospel of happy work to bear on the various situations of life, he begins to embellish it for its own sake, and dwell on it fondly as "a good that is comely," and roll up for it a momentum of enthusiasm; until at its last and most amplified mention it has become a rather elaborate programme of life: —

The manner in which it is set forth and made comely.

Survey iii. 117.

"Go thou, eat thy bread with gladness, and drink with merry heart thy wine; for already hath God accepted thy works. At every season let thy garments be white, and oil upon thy head not be lacking. Prove life with a woman whom thou lovest, all the days of thy vapor-life which God hath given thee under the sun — all the days of thy vanity;

Survey v. 140-155.

for this is thy portion in life, and in thy labor which thou laborest under the sun. All that thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might; for there is no work, nor cleverness, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."

The case summed up.

Here, it would seem, is a compensation, an offset to vanity, which Koheleth has very deeply at heart. And we can see now what is the solid ground toward which the whole course of his book has been advancing. Against the perverseness of environment and fate he sets the intrinsic man, for whom he provides a world within, and a work wherein he can be man and master of his fate. All this lifts the book grandly out of its sad setting and furnishes a pulsation of courage and good cheer, in the strength of which man can leave brooding cares and bear his weight on the common blessings that make life livable.

The question of profit, with its largest answer.

We are now in position to see how it is that when Koheleth raises the question, "What profit hath man in all his labor?" he has in mind not only an implied negative but an eventual answer. It is frankly negative at first because it looks only at externals; at the pay which men value as the reward and equivalent of their work, at the profits for the sake of which so many a life is virtually put up for sale, and beyond that at the cosmic round

which with its self-completing laws of being seems to furnish the vast archetype of it all. In that sense of his work there is no profit. When the exchange is complete, the work done and the life lived, there is no residuum of enrichment; what shall a man give, what shall he expect from the universe, in exchange for his soul? As Koheleth goes on, however, associating his work more intimately with joy and health and good cheer, the negative implication grows dimmer and disappears. We cannot do justice to the facts of life without owning that in the work itself, with its involvement of talent and use and skill, there may be a residuum of noble character; so the work, being the expression of manhood, is its own reward, neither to be bought nor sold. And that this is so, the joy that informs it is the attestation. Joy is the expression of well-being, the announcement that the powers of life are making music together; and to see this rising out of the work which is our portion is but another way of recognizing that life is an intrinsic thing.

How this opens the esthetic door of life.

It is by this way of joy in one's individual work, a way open to every lowliest man, that Koheleth seizes and applies the principle which gives value to the Greek movement around him. It was, as I have said, a movement of growth, from which Koheleth too was

deriving, though perhaps unconsciously, his share of benefit. There was doubtless a mighty and in general wholesome craving to give the esthetic side of life something of its due. The Hebrew religion, austerely practical, had subdued the idolatrous tendencies which manifest themselves in sensuous ways, and was absorbed in the minute exploitation of its law. The national genius was not esthetic, not ideal; we see that in the fact that no branch of the fine arts, except perhaps sacred poetry and music, was resorted to as a relief and emancipation of the soul. What their Greek neighbors expressed in sculpture and architecture and philosophy, the Hebrews laid out on their worship of Jehovah; and the vitality of their religious ideas is their imperishable monument. But we can well think that when, as in Koheleth's time, the lamp burned a little dim in the house of the Lord, the coming of the Hellenic influence, a luxury of reveries and arts and refinements, may have been like a great springtide in all one starved side of life. And this plea for joy in work is the bluff way in which Koheleth meets it. It looks bald and forbidding at first, until we come to see that it strikes for the very root of the matter. Every great or beautiful work that has launched out in life beyond the desire or possibility of reward, and

Wisdom, St. Paul calls it, 1 Cor. i. 22.

made achievements that cannot be bought or sold, has obeyed the same principle. Art, as men are defining it nowadays, is the expression of joy in work. The supreme reaches of life, in what man creates and in what expresses his truest individuality, are utterly dead to the idea of profit; there is nothing to exchange them for. In the lower work, too, even in the routine and drudgery which is so common a lot, here is the one way to make life livable. The man who tends a machine may learn to love his machine for the very skill and delicacy and inventive wisdom of which it is the almost living embodiment. As William Morris, whose career was a living commentary on Koheleth, expresses it: "It seems to me that the real way to enjoy life is to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by taking interest in them."

"There are but two possessions," says Professor Carl Hilty, "which may be attained by persons of every condition, which never desert one through life, and are a constant consolation in misfortune. These are work and love. Those who shut these blessings out of life commit a greater sin than suicide. They do not even know what it is that they throw away. Rest without work is a thing which in this life one cannot endure." Of these two pos-

What solid asset of life Koheleth's response to his time has elicited.

sessions Koheleth, rebuking the too self-indulgent dreams of his age, has fallen back on the first, on work; and out of it, as accepted in joy, has drawn for life a noble resource of courage and cheer. From the large significance of the second, from the full meaning of love as a life power, his eyes are still holden; it is too early in the world's years, it is not yet the fullness of the times. And this, which we recognize as the side on which the book is lacking, is the deep reason why with all its cheer the strain of the book is ineffably sad. One possession, which he has rescued from the chaos of vanities and illusions, which by disengaging it from the paltry association of barter he has added to the surplusage side of the soul's account, is a possession beyond price, a crown of the old dispensation, a solid asset of upbuilding as far as it goes.

Hilty, On Happiness, page 93.

CHAPTER III

THE ISSUE IN CHARACTER

IN its broad logical effect the Book of Koheleth resolves itself into a premise and a conclusion. The premise, conceded as beyond question, is the austere world fact in whose toils the soul of manhood is involved, and which it cannot escape. Whatever the solution of things at which the sage arrives, he must take into the account this universal vanity of endeavor, this imprisoning fate, this dearth of clear outlook, as a truth which proves itself.

How the logic of the book makes for character.

> "It is the echo of time; and he whose heart
> Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
> Was copied from a human tongue, can never
> Recall when he was living yet knew not this."

Browning, Paracelsus, ii.

The conclusion, not appended as to a train of reasoning, but welling up everywhere and orbing progressively into definiteness, is the answer to the implicit question, What shall the man do about it? what manner of man shall he be? This growing answer, coördinated and made unitary, is the issue in character.

In character, we say; and here we are using the new dialect which Koheleth's time and the strain of Wisdom that he represents are beginning to demand. "An observer of the course of history at this time," says Professor Smith, "might have anticipated the fading out of vital Jewish religion." True, no doubt; and yet an observer of the deeper spiritual currents may have seen signs that left the situation not wholly deplorable. For human nature has many doors of expression, and when one issue has fulfilled itself, another, succeeding, may take its vitality and perpetuate an equally genuine strain of manhood. Wisdom, from the period of the early Proverbs down, had been clearing the ground for a new expression of life, and so when the religious impulse seemed to be losing its edge, as it was bound sooner or later to do, a fresh energy was ready to supplement without superseding the old; to be laid out not on objects of devotion, but on objects of activity. In other words, here in Koheleth's body of counsel transition is made from life expressed in terms of religion to life expressed in terms of character, from the sacred to the secular, or perhaps it would be more exact to say, from the one-sided man to the all-round man. It is all one life; it can tolerate no schism and remain

The character issue supplementing the religious.

Smith, Old Testament History, page 440.

integral. But the first look of this new expression, until we see what it has retained of the old, may seem like a decay and disintegration. It is not so much that as a shifting of emphasis. Religion has had the stress heretofore; in prophetic word, in devout Temple songs, in that law which has come to be regarded as the sacred word of Jehovah, in the elaborate ritual of the sanctuary. It is time now to gather the fruits of Wisdom, as the wise heart puts faith in itself and lays hold on a practical world.

That this is no casting off of the religious attitude and spirit, but its ally and helpmate, is shown in the large sanity of its result. Wisdom, working on its independent line, has come to identify its ideals with those of religion. To be reverent and righteous is to be wise; to be ungodly is to be a fool; the very beginning of wisdom, as all the sages agree, is the fear of God. There is no lack of harmony between the sages on the one side and the scribes and psalmists and prophets on the other. But because the religious expression of life is already well cared for, it may be taken for granted; and Wisdom, going on from this, may wreak its thought and energies on the management of its world. There is much that needs counsel here; life is not an affair of the Sabbath and of the Temple only, but

Its harmony with the religious.

of every day and of common industries and relations. This is Koheleth's sphere. May it not be, then, that in Koheleth's age religion is dying in order to rise again, is taking on an expression more vital because more searching, in learning to use its practical secular energies? It is still the fear of God and the keeping of commandments, working not through dying forms or pietistic lingo, but through a character that does its work and is silent.

I

The grounding of character in the dominating consciousness of Koheleth's era.

In order to judge the distinctive fibre of the character to which Koheleth's counsel is conformed, we must, to begin with, take fresh note of his era, and the grounding it was adapted to give. For his man is the creature not of the book alone but of the time, with the book as interpreter and guide.

The old dispensation and its permanence for character.

Koheleth's era, "the night of legalism," just when at its central point it becomes self-conscious and recognizes its condition as a night, connotes a character to correspond, the character adapted to a world lying in the dimness of an earlier spiritual stage. It is in a sense our disadvantage that we have to speak of this Old Testament era, describing its

immaturities and marking its limits, as if it were past. It is only the fact that we look back upon it from an era of greater light which makes us read it so. The old dispensation, the dispensation of law and subjection, is always with us. It must stay as long as we live the life of the body and the life of the world; it is here not to pass but to be fulfilled. If the soul, kicking against the pricks, intensifies its natural subjection into bondage, it is the soul's own unwisdom. If a larger dispensation, bringing truth and freedom, ever supersedes the old, it supersedes by including the old in full, no jot or tittle lacking, and all revitalized to full spiritual expression. Therefore the character that is fitted to move at home in the twilight era, and use its conditions for upbuilding, is a character not of ancient history but of permanent and modern claim. It is an ideal that appeals to all one side of human nature.

See above, pages 17 sqq., 23 sqq.

As felt by a deeply responsive soul like Koheleth's, the sum total of impression coming on the Hebrew mind from its Mosaic era resolves itself into a pervading sense of pressure from above. He is here in the world to be governed. The consciousness that a will not his own is drawing his lines and prescribing his lot for him has so got into his

The world's unspoken sense of pressure from above.

nerves and blood that it is perhaps only at rare seasons, or when he is a rare nature, that he feels the burden of it; it takes a Koheleth to realize and describe

> "the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world."

Nor has even he reached the point where he can conceive an alternative. It has become the supreme and for him the final order of things. It is as if his universe were made and fitted down upon him like a strait-jacket, and as if in his prison-house existence it were really an immaterial question whether the man achieved a self-moved individual character or not.

How Hebrew history has wrought to engender this sense.

To this prevailing life consciousness all the lines of the Hebrew sage's history have inexorably converged. The Mosaic legalism, to begin and culminate with, has from a flexible and friendly code passed into the hands of scribes and priests who are so plotting to bring under its sway all the operations of life, neutral as well as moral, that the time is getting ripe for a Sadducaic protest. Centuries of exile and dispersion and foreign domination, under a succession of arbitrary and unsympathetic rulers, have contributed to make the feeling of bondage inveterate. And finally, the awakening of Koheleth's scientific insight

from the Hebrew to the cosmic sense reveals in a vaster purview what the soul may expect as soon as it emerges into the larger world. It is the same old condition, on whatever scale, — "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined." Law Mosaic for the soul, law despotic for the state, law cosmic for the world of nature, all agree in one; it is the apotheosis of legalism, a dead pressure from above and without, an alien power and will imposing upon man a life which in its final analysis reduces to a task-work round of unchosen duty and labor.

What shall Koheleth make of it all?

Here exist, in potency, all the excuses that men have for losing their grip and going under. Here at best is an environment which affords support for hardly more than a nerveless passive existence, treading its appointed round because it must, but with no answering throb of loyalty accepting its lot. Yet here too, rightly apprehended, is an arena of opportunity, from which may come a character the sturdier for the untoward conditions overcome, a character which in itself is an unconscious prophecy of a greater manhood era. How, then, shall Koheleth's body of counsel conform itself to the situation, and point out the way that a sane wisdom dictates? What, in other words, are the fundamental lines of the character that he has at heart for man?

Well, as regards its determining attitude, there

is in it, to a degree, the same note of reaction that we have seen in his encounter with his time; but it is a reaction whose thrust is quite other. Instead of being made up as a remonstrance against its environment of speculative fallacy, it is tempered to that calm counterpoise which inheres in a soul that in untoward conditions stands erect, unsubdued, strong in its resources of wisdom and knowledge and joy, sufficient to itself. "Having done all, to stand," is the phrase in which St. Paul expresses it; neither to flee nor staying to be unmanned. It requires some reaction, in the face of an iron universe and an unrevealed outlook, to do this; so much at least — that action and reaction are equal.

1. Its determining attitude toward its universe.

This is not rebellion; it is not lack of humility. Nor is this attitude taken in mere blind proud Stoicism. To make up the conception of it, Koheleth has gone the whole round of creation and spoken as he saw. By defining his position, cosmic and spiritual, he has risen above it, to the vantage-point where it lies before him in light and control. His very tears and pity are the protest of a spirit that will not let the pressure from above crush him. Underneath the weight his wise self-reliant soul is asserting itself, yet not evading

Resolving itself into open-eyed acceptance of the conditions of being.

one whit; is finding if not a way out, yet a way to bear it in joy. In a word, what Koheleth has at heart is a character which, when all elements of being are reckoned, accepts the universe.[1] It must by the conditions of the case be a character of endurance, whether of positive achievement or not, a character acted upon, but to this extrinsic pressure opposing, not in insubordination but in courage and tempered cheer, an inner reactive spirit which meets it on equal ground. And so from futile quests in life and from self-pleasing dreams of the future the soul is gently yet steadily forced inward upon itself, upon the potential wealth of being that inheres in its own movement and choice. In spite of his hard environment, the

1 "At bottom the whole concern of both morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe. Do we accept it only in part and grudgingly, or heartily and altogether? Shall our protests against certain things in it be radical and unforgiving, or shall we think that, even with evil, there are ways of living that must lead to good? If we accept the whole, shall we do so as if stunned into submission, — . . . or shall we do so with enthusiastic assent? Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and fully developed manifestations, the service of the highest never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place." — James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, page 41.

man may be strong enough to stand under the world's weight, resourceful enough to erect the kingdom of his own mind, wise enough, accepting his universe as it is, to coin from his individual contact with life his own personal and individual joy.

Such an attitude as this creates its own idiom, the idiom of the secular as distinguished from the devotional, of the free and self-initiative as distinguished from the prescriptive.

2. Its resulting idiom of expression.

It does not employ the well-seasoned religious vocabulary, but neither does it reject it. It does not hold over man the legal terrors of penalty, nor does it shape all conduct with reference to Saturday-night wages. It does not, assuming that the heart is depraved, go on to treat that depravity as if it were an organic disease. Rather, its counsels conform themselves homogeneously to what in the commentary I have called the intrinsic man, the man who can take a sound and sufficient manhood for granted. "God made man upright,"

Survey v. 33.

and while it is portentously true that "they have sought out many devices," yet it is not assumed that these have twisted his nature permanently out of shape. The fact that "there is not a righteous man on earth who doeth good and sinneth not," is indeed not ignored; but instead of being used as something to be "lived

Survey v. 4.

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up to," like the old Calvinist's doctrine of total depravity, it is laid into the personal scale to balance our too harsh judgments of others. There is a sound intrinsic manhood at the centre of things, for which rules and counsels may be made; the very fact that, when the evil day comes to offset the good, man can be thrown back on himself without reference to the future enlightening, is evidence of this. Here where the pressure converges dwells an authentic human soul, with a world and a potential autonomy of its own; not therefore at the mercy, or the caprice, of crooked fate.

Survey iv. 86.

As one more fundamental element, there must for this intrinsic man be recognized an all-men's point of contact with life, not esoteric nor one-sided, at which a wise interpreter like Koheleth can lay hold of the central strand of manhood and weave it into a tissue of comely character. Where shall this point be found? Not in the Temple; not among those learned scribes to whom the people that know not the law are cursed; not in the stratum of the wealthy and distinguished. All these represent some side of life to which access is by some privilege of birth or occasion or special endowment. Upon all these the universal pressure has been in some aspect mitigated. But under-

3. Its point of universal contact with life.

neath them all is a stratum of obligation to which every man is more or less bound, and it is upon this stratum that Koheleth takes his stand. That is the field of work, of labor. Labor is the natural obverse of a régime of law, the ordained portion of the man whose life is on the under side of authority. This means virtually every man. Labor comes so near being the universal lot, and indeed so opens the channels of all that is integral and individual in man, while on the other hand man is so undone without it, that any comprehensive counsel of character must reckon with it as a normal *milieu*. Man's hardships are suffered, man's worth proved, man's rewards won, in the all-encompassing sphere of labor. The routine of the world's ongoings, the dubious question of recompense, the grip of poverty and rivalry and oppression, the projects that turn out to be a "chase after wind," all draw together to one focus, where, at the beginning and foundation of a world's activities, is the man who is bowing to the commands and doing the work.

Koheleth's wisdom and sympathy in the interpretation of it.

And in Koheleth has risen the interpreter for the era. His counsels, circling round the root of the matter, are none the less vital for coming on his heedless age like the remonstrances of a reactionary and old fogy. They will spur and rankle until

they have gained their hearing. For, first, he is endowed with that scientific poise of wisdom to strike for the essential point where man ails and whereon he can build. It is to the field of toil, the world-welter of activity, that he directs his first inquiry: "What profit hath man in all his labor, which he laboreth under the sun?" It is in happy, hearty work that he sees the solid offset to the enigmas of a crooked world: "Behold, what I have seen! good that is comely: to eat and to drink and to see good in all his labor which he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him." It is on work done with our might before the grave closes over us that he sets the stamp of his culminating counsel.—Secondly, he is endowed with the more inner and friendly insight of sympathy. We do not have to read far without being aware that his "search and survey" of things is made with an aching heart. His *Weltanschauung*, with the baffling problems it reveals, has laid hold on the tenderest strings of his being. The sympathy and pity which we associate with the spirit of our latest age had pioneer utterance in him. What modern scientist at his experimenting could more bitterly say, "I revolved this until it made my heart despair concerning all

Proem, 3.

Survey iii. 117.

Survey v. 151.

Survey i. 103.

the labor which I had labored under the sun"? It was indeed through tears that he could quarry out of a hard universe such counsel as would enable his brother-men to eat their bread in joy.

Here, then, is Koheleth's fraternal appeal, not manufactured or academic but organic, to that vast manhood stratum where the pressure of things is most vitally felt. "I would think, too," says Stevenson, "of that other war which is as old as mankind, and is indeed the life of man; the unsparing war, the grinding slavery of competition; the toil of seventy years, dear-bought bread, precarious honor, the perils and pitfalls, and the poor rewards." It is into just this turbid life of the great mass of humanity that his most poignant feelings and still more helpfully his sane interpretations enter. He assumes indeed the rôle of a king, "king over Israel in Jerusalem;" but this, except as the sympathetic sage is in very truth a king of men, is a transparent literary device. What he feels, its burden and its tone of thought, is the lot of the laborer; and while his heart aches over the weariness and unpaid drudgery of it, he longs also, from his superior insight, to show what a compensation and glory may inhere in it. His typical man is the man who has a work to do; his ideal portion the

Koheleth's book a workingman's book.

Survey i. 1.

worker's portion. His book is the one which, beyond any other book of scripture, we may value as distinctively the workingman's book.

II

Koheleth's counsel of character applied to the Jew of his time.

Of this essential grounding of character we look first to see the effect it was adapted to produce in its own land and era; what kind of a Jew, two centuries before Christ, could be built and furnished upon it.

The commonplace classes and annals that must be interrogated.

In a character so grounded we are not to look for the qualities that make the greatest noise in the world. The fact that it has its root in endurance, and is consciously acted upon, makes rather for those unobtrusive traits which wear well, and which can assimilate the large proportion of commonplace with which man's every-day life is weighted. To find how it is adapted to the national heritage and bent, therefore, we must needs go where these virtues are staple. This takes us remote from kings and capitals, priests and temples, to the great rank and file who have to do the work and shoulder the burdens. It takes us too among the annals that, for literary effect, are proverbially dull. We have the further disadvantage that Koheleth's book comes to us out of a period so nearly unhistoric that we can only guess at its landmarks

of date. There is little that is salient, and nothing at all imposing or picturesque, to lay hold of. The book, in fact, gives more to history than it derives from it; and indeed rightly read, it does much to make the dimness of its era luminous. But it gives not by use or recognition of identifiable events; rather by what we may call its spiritual idiom, — that large reverberation of things inner and outer in which we overhear not only the new utterance of an individual thinker, but the ground tone of a people's thought.

What Koheleth recognizes in the state.

The Book of Koheleth was written at a time, probably of the later Greek domination, when Israel's lot as a tributary people was the accepted and settled order of things. There are in it no stirrings of rebellion; but neither are there stirrings of loyalty. So far as politics is concerned, it simply accepts an inevitable in which it has no share. Writing, in spite of his Solomonic assumption, not at all as a king but as a man of the people, and identified with the earning class, Koheleth sees government only on the under and for the most part seamy side.

Survey III. 83.

He sees where the organized system of tax-farming reaches its grinding-point in extortion and oppression of the poor. He sees the cynical iniquity of the courts and exalted places; and on the side of the oppressed

Survey III. 5, 84.

no appeal and no comforter. He sees, as if from below, boy-kings feasting in the morning and surrounded by the shallow favorites for the sake of whom princes of noble blood are reduced to servitude. The universal espionage of which the air around him is full drives him to prove wisdom by the words he does not say; or if he must confront the ruler, to be reticent, conciliatory, tactful. The general reversal of social norms — merit ignored and folly exalted, ostentation and wealth getting the honors and the costly funerals, money the answer to everything — has engendered in him the habit of looking round on the other side of every fact, to see where the real values of life are; herein indeed lies the practical usefulness of his inquiry.

Survey vi. 46, 76; v. 43; vi. 86.

Survey vi. 85; v. 66.

All this is no more than we may expect from the provincial administration of an Oriental despotism; it is shameless corruption and tyranny, which, however, cannot authenticate itself by recorded events. We can only say, the book before us, in its counsels of wisdom, has at heart that type of character which will enable a man to endure the misgovernment of a pre-Christian outlying province.

The typical characteristics of an Oriental despotism.

And indeed, Koheleth's type of man does so

much more than endure that in the solid good sense of his character we can well afford to let the highly stationed fools and showy fops go their own vulgar way and be forgotten. He can learn first of all, as he stands in self-respecting integrity before his ruler, to honor the office if he cannot respect the man; can have the self-control not to leave his place even for abuse and injustice. Then there is the virtue, one may almost say Koheleth's sovereign virtue, of silence, with its feeding motive of discretion and tact. The keeping to the safe side, the cultivation of the non-indictable ingredients of conduct; — this, in Koheleth's conception of it, is by no means cognate with trimming and opportunism. The basis of wisely defined principle makes the polar difference. For underneath it all Koheleth is laying on his Jewish reader the conviction that he, the workingman who orders his work in wisdom, is the real sinew of the state and of society. Even in humility and poverty he can respect himself, can so live as to be proud of his station. "Nevertheless," says Koheleth in the face of cruelest iniquity from the powers above him, "nevertheless, the profit of a land is for all; the king himself is subservient to the field." This is of course a plea on the

The principle of character that he sets over against it.

Survey v. 45; vi. 41.

Survey iii. 88.

laborer's part for justice and immunity; but it is more, it is an expression of the laborer's pride and glory in the indispensable calling wherein he consciously holds the welfare of the monarch in his hand. The uncomely part has discovered that in an essential way it has the greater comeliness. And that this proceeds from no craven or weakling spirit, that it represents a principle hewn out of a manly conception of life, we have the whole tissue of Koheleth's observation and counsel to prove.

What kind of body politic this character makes.

Thus the book's current of power, in its day and land, is a unitary influence to make the integrity of intrinsic manhood prevail. That charming parable of the poor wise man, saving the city by his unvalued wisdom, is in the same vein and appraisal. "And I said, Better is wisdom than might, though the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not regarded." What difference, after all, does the recognition make? — to be the man is the thing, is its own reward. Thus it is that Koheleth works out his programme of life for the man whose fully acknowledged lot it is to be on the under side of things. The heedless rulers of Palestine little thought what a sterling body of subjects Koheleth's counsels were shaping for them. If the Jew could not be architrave or

Survey vi. 23.

tower of state, but only a sill or buried foundation stone, let him at least, as an intelligent weight-bearer, make for a stable body politic. To govern is no business of his, either to dictate or meddle with; and if he must accept the humbler business of being governed, it shall be without whining or truckling, and with eyes open. And thus he shall follow not only the line of least resistance for himself, but of soundest avails for life.

Similarity of the religious strain of character.

The same strain of principle and character, undemonstrative yet intrinsically healthy, comes to light whenever Koheleth approaches that side of life with which the Hebrew genius is most naturally identified — the religious. It might be called the wise man's relation to a venerable state church and to a body of prescriptive religious doctrine and custom.

Examination of his skeptical and unemotional tone.

Here we must clear away a superficial conception. The name skeptic, which the thinking of several generations has fastened upon Koheleth, has doubtless led many without further heed to class him with the ungodly and the scoffers. Nothing could be more mistaken. His skepticism, which of course we may not deny, is directed not against what is holy or religious or established, but against tendencies which in the long run may dissipate the vital substance of religion. It is the skepticism

which insists on the evidence of experience and on a deeper grounding of things. Its fibre is reverence for the unalloyed, unglamoured truth. Still, we must concede, his book is pitched in a moderate spiritual key, a distinctly unpietistic tone, which may well perplex those superficial thinkers to whom religion must be emotional and demonstrative to make its reality felt. It is very evident that Koheleth does not like effusiveness. We recall the contempt he shows for the vapid wordiness of his time; not unlikely his reaction against it is a trifle excessive. The religion to which his temperament inclines, and which perhaps is the natural efflux of his dimly lighted era, is a religion of reticence and inwardness, a religion that shuns to invade the soul's sanctuary with clatter of much speaking. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart hasten to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon the earth; therefore be thy words few." Survey iii. 62.

Koheleth believes in God, and believes unreservedly; but a God who speaks through law and an ordered cosmos is not very near, and need not be approached with multitude of words; too remote to be companioned with, too all-wise to be wheedled. Our life's business is with His works and world; we adjust ourselves to Him by adjust- Applied to the great staples of religious thought, — God and future life.

ing ourselves to them. There is a large area of truth to which we render all the higher honor by simply taking it for granted, while we save our cares and our plans for something else. In that area, for Koheleth, lie the basal truths of God and future life, truths which are by no means denied, or even made doubtful, by being laid up in the unprofaned sanctuary where words are petty and weak; nor are they less truly a moulding power in life for being translated into ungarrulous activity.

From God to God-given work.

Herein we see the direct impulse to that cheerful, God-appointed, God-accepted work which closes and crowns all Koheleth's vistas of life. The spirit of such work is the test of the soul's axioms of being. Work so received and so done is the marriage of the seen and the unseen, of the worldly and the religious; it is the means, too, by which, if by any, the vision of the universe is focused from a bewildering phantasmagoria to a self-justifying order.[1] "Wherefore I saw that . . . man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion." By a similar recourse, it will be remem-

Survey ii. 67.

[1] "All things become clear to me by work more than by anything else. Any kind of drudgery will help one out of the most uncommon either sentimental or speculative perplexity; the attitude of work is the only one in which one can see things properly." — Clough, *Life and Letters*, page 174.

bered, a modern successor of Koheleth, Arthur Hugh Clough, endeavored to clear away from his view of things the mists that clouded it: —

"It seems His newer will
We should not think at all of Him, but turn,
And of the world that He has given us make
What best we may;" —

Clough, Life and Letters, page 175.

similar, except that Koheleth's transference of care springs not from doubt and pain, but from an unspeculative acceptance of the situation. If God's laws of being have hidden His face, here at least, close by, is man's work, with its creative potencies and its interactions with life; and whatever dimness is in the world, whatever thwartings of vanity, his portion it is to rejoice in this as a stewardship from God. With this abiding consciousness, the very sense of God's unapproachableness, which the age of legalism has so naturally engendered, may make for a very sound and sterling fibre of character.

From vague futurity to eternity in the heart.

The same practical transmutation, as we have already traced, vitalizes his relation to the vexed problems of futurity. It is not the fact of immortality that he calls in question, but the defining and verifying of the fact. Those occult things, he virtually says, are things for which we have no present occasion. As for the fact itself, we have enough to take

for granted, enough to build character upon. For when, in his survey of "the toil which God hath given to the sons of men, to toil therein," he traces its elements of beauty and timeliness, one component, he notes well, is the fact that "also He hath put eternity in their heart." Here, eminently, is a world fact which does not gain by being tossed about in the limbo of dialectics; it is most honored by being laid up among those living truths which work unseen to mould the issues of life. Man's true response is to let the presupposition of it be an influence to uplift and upbuild.

Survey ii. 23.

And that Koheleth so treats this strain of eternity is evinced by the whole trend and body of his counsel. Especially notable it is that while he is ready, nay even labors, to portray death in all its blank mysteriousness, he always depicts his ideals of action on a background not of impending dissolution but of life, as if life were the only tenable presupposition of things. His descriptions of senility and death are made expressly, it would seem, in order that men may *not* make up life with reference to them. His most jubilant and comprehensive programme of conduct comes just after his most unrelieved depiction of doom; but not

How life is made up with reference to life.

Survey vii. 16 sqq.

Namely in Survey v. 140-155; compare page 85 above.

until he has erected between the passages an adequate bridge to life. "For who is he that is bound up with all the living? — to him there is hope; for the living dog is better than the dead lion." It is not decrepitude, nor death, nor mystic search for the unseen,[1] which gives the courage or the motive; it is rather the valued fullness, the unimpaired function, of life itself. The life that now is, on this solid earth, is the arena where the problem of living, with its inhering religious sanctions, must be wrought to solution. This truth stands fast, whatever we ignore or take for granted.

Survey v. 128.

As to the forms of religion, the Jew of Koheleth's time had his established church, ancient and sacred, to which he belonged by birth; and with its service of song and sacrifice going on every day, as it were a process of nature, he could treat it as something with which his participation, nay, even his presence or absence, had very little to do. Koheleth's one re-

The Jew in his church and forms of worship.

1 "As to mysticism, to go along with it even counter to fact and to reason may sometimes be tempting, though to do so would take me right away off the terra firma of practicable duty and business into the limbo of unrevealed things, the forbidden terra incognita of vague hopes and hypothetical aspirations. But when I lose my legs, I lose my head; I am seized with spiritual vertigo and meagrims unutterable." — Clough, *Life and Letters*, page 175.

ference to the Temple service seems to assume that the worshiper had the conventionalized consciousness not unnaturally engendered by such a state of things. Having employed a priestly class to put his worship into form, and having given them the building and the tools, the Jew was apparently content to foot the bill and be a spectator. For such a man the counsel is not superfluous that he "keep his foot" when he goes to the house of God, and manifest the reverence due the service by drawing nigh to hear instead of getting off into the Temple courts to loiter and gossip. It is in connection with this mention of the Temple worship, we will remember, that Koheleth gives expression to his irritation at the wordiness of his time. The "fools' sacrifice" which he censures as the worse alternative seems to be merely the bringing to God's house of words instead of homage, clatter of talk instead of a hushed and listening heart. And all is just his plea to accord to the established ritual, whether one's heart is in it or not, the deference of a plain sincerity. If the religious functions are so distributed that your part consists only in hearing, then by all means be a good hearer.

Survey iii. 68.

The same sincerity, as it were religion on straight business principles, comes in to regulate the matter of vows; the value of which lies not in the

promise by which one advertises his cheap devoutness, but in the payment by which he stands to his word, making it as good when there is no compulsion exerted or honor gained, as when he can advantage himself. This leads us back, in the most searching of tests, to Koheleth's underlying conception of the intrinsic man. In the rigidly prescribed Jewish ritual the custom of vows would seem to have been the one feature that rested entirely on the devotee's free will. It was not commanded; its infraction was not punished. From impulse to completed act, from promise to payment, he was wholly a law to himself, doing presumably just as his sincerest heart prompted. His attitude toward it therefore represented accurately what he was. He could act his own nature, false or true. He could play fast and loose with the institution, and get as immediate reward a cheap repute for sanctity and generosity; or he could make it the spontaneous outflow of a spirit of truth and sacrifice which is its own reason for being. What Koheleth's pronouncement shall be is not left ambiguous; its bald peremptoriness reveals an animus akin to indignation. "Better that thou vow not," he says, "than that thou vow and pay not. . . . He hath no pleasure in fools." The intrinsic man must prove that his

The Jew in his voluntary vows. Survey iii. 70.

Survey iii. 71, 73.

native fibre is sound, that he can be intrusted with his own noblest bent and will. This is the clear ray of common sense which Koheleth injects into the fog of words and casuistry which, it seems, had invaded the church of his day. And the plain end to which his counsel points, when the soul has got its orientation amid the "dreams and vanities and words many" which are sophisticating the issues of life, is just the beginning of all sound wisdom, the wholesome fear of God.

All this but the idealizing of the actual Jewish character.

We have tried to get an image of Koheleth's typical Jew, as evolved from a wise response to that dominion of subjection which has had its free course with him in church and state. The figure is, however, no mere creation of theory or counsel. In the main elements of his character we have but to fall back on history for illustration.

How Koheleth's book reveals the Jew of ordinary life and of history.

When the Words of Koheleth were written, the Jew had received the historic moulding and stamp by which he is known to the ages since, and to the present day. Between the lines of Koheleth's counsel we discern a side of the Hebrew character which otherwise we might easily miss; and yet it is the side from which we may best identify it with what we know. The Jew as prophet we find in the desert, or in the lonely grandeur of divine enthu-

siasm. The Jew as priest, the Jew as psalmist, we find in the Temple, absorbed in adoration and prayer. Echoes of these traits, surviving, make up the staple of his scripture and religion; and we take them as a full expression of him, as if the Jew were always in prayer or sacrifice or devout ecstasy. But how do we connect these with the Jew whom we meet to-day; and meanwhile, where *was* the Jew of the people, of the rank and file? The book before us, beyond any other Old Testament book, puts us on the track of him. He had his commercial and industrial interests, which had become so much his life's idiom that Koheleth must needs describe his evaluation of life in mercantile terms, terms of profit and loss. He had his law and his church so mingled that life and religion were interwoven in one tissue. He had a mind so cultured in Mosaic integrity, so truly a kingdom in itself, that whether in despotism or dispersion, he had the resource to find a *modus vivendi*, an inner adjustment to conditions hard or easy, an intrinsic fund of character not at the mercy of environment, and endowed according to God's plan with wisdom and knowledge and joy.

All this is a refined expression of the alert, level-headed, business spirit. It uses the facts of life as it finds them, and translates them from the ecclesiastical dialect into terms of practical energy and

enterprise. But all this reads, too, when we think of it, like a protocol of the permanent Hebrew type of character, modern as well as ancient. It gives us a glimpse of the real son of Jacob-Israel, uncinctured and unmitred, as he accommodated himself to a time of alien domination, and became a sterling subject, and minded his own business, gaining his livelihood in the field and the market, in the places of industry and traffic. And we find in him the Jew of the centuries and of to-day. By following an ideal not unlike this of Koheleth's, the Jew in his perpetual exile among the nations has everywhere forged his way to thrift and prosperity, as he suited his activities to conditions adverse or friendly, and found in his livelihood the support that was denied him from without. His training in the long school of subjection has stood him in good stead. He has learned his lesson well, and the lesson has capabilities.

The Jew of to-day as of yesterday.

III

But though loyally Hebrew in spirit, Koheleth is not concerned with buttressing or beautifying Judaism, as such. His scientific sense of things has liberalized his vision. As he has learned to read in the universe a cosmic order, so he has come to move

Koheleth's ideal of character not Jewish alone but universal.

among men, and to give them counsel, as a citizen of the world. Leaving the provincial machinery of Mosaism and rabbinism unmentioned, leaving wholly unused the parish conceptions of sin and cleansing, ecclesiasticism and religious forms, he is striking out for a character which shall coördinate with a larger realm of thought and action, a character available for man as man, unbondaged by era or environment. One limitation only it must needs acknowledge, the limitation of the pressure from above, cosmic and spiritual, in subjection to which its lines of life are shaped, whether the law of the spirit of life is in it or not. In a word, Koheleth has at heart the character of the perennial Old Dispensation, as it fills and rounds out its type.

The man on the under side of things, — Koheleth is the true comrade and counselor for him. We know the man from daily observation. He is childish and petulant, perhaps, or hard and intractable. If he has spirit, that spirit resolves itself into a quarrel with the universe; if not, he becomes a listless quarry-slave, hopeless of better things. To make the turning of the worm somehow effective, he organizes unions, or oftener accepts the organizations ready made, content to be a passive bolt or pinion in the machine as he imagines dimly

Koheleth's programme for the man on the under side of things.

that the motive power or purpose of the union has to do with some vague redress. His walking delegate is accepted as the brain and messiah of his class. If his imagination were large enough to identify a sage who can see all, or a Christ who loves all, with his interest; if he could see such a man as one who would grind his axe or turn his mill, he would choose him as his walking delegate and would take the oath of his union. But he stints his imagination. It stops with his day's work, with his mine or his loom. He sees nothing large beyond. To him the end and culmination of things is Saturday night with its pay envelope. He does not look up through his lot or through his world, does not comprehend or explain the superincumbent pressure. Koheleth does. Koheleth has looked into things until he has acquired a cosmic consciousness, and this has changed his appreciations. If there is crookedness and oppression, marvel not at the matter. He sees an order, and a place for each man, just fitted for him if he will make it such. This leads to a body of counsel recognizing things as they are, and a contentment to correspond. Instead of a quarrel with the universe, acceptance of it. Instead of a listless enslaved spirit, calm reaction of equality and comprehension; man as great as his universe. This is the key of the situation; all comes out of this.

Thus far our study of Koheleth's counsels has revealed a character sterling, resourceful, self-respecting, tactful; but also, it must be confessed, distinctly pedestrian. It has no wings, does not rise to the dashing or heroic, is always self-contained, with a prudent eye to the bearings and consequences of things. Perhaps it had to be so, in the heavy atmosphere of its era; perhaps its idiom of endurance, ingrained in a long-subjected nation, made the shrinkage necessary. And yet all this seems to leave a side of human nature scantily provided for; that side from which open the generous gateways of headlong, adventurous, self-forgetting action, — surely an element of life that no era or scheme of manhood can afford to ignore. Such unrelieved goodyness would have, we may be sure, little appeal to that man of our own time who "would never suffer you to think that you were living, if there were not, somewhere in your life, some touch of heroism, to do or to endure." Nor is it this, but something quite other, and something equally distinct from its audacious tone, which has made Koheleth's book the favorite of unconformed souls. If they have responded to its independent spirit, they have not missed finding in it something strong and meaty too.

Its lack of the heroic element.

The late Fleeming Jenkin; see Stevenson's Memoir, page 166.

We come here close upon the great organic lack in Koheleth's assessment of life; a lack whose existence has been repeatedly intimated, and a particularization of which is due later. Meanwhile, let us see if in the undeniable tonic quality of his thought there is not connoted some element of character to fill the gap, something to make the stress and struggle of a depressing era not only sustaining but masterful and buoyant. There must surely be discoverable in every period, however dim and tyrannous, some stairway to faith and joy.

Whether the organic lack of the book has left some chance of compensation.

It may be questioned whether character can impress men as truly heroic, in the large sweep of that term, until its main thrust has got beyond the merely reactionary; until, emancipated from its exacting emergencies, it can strike out unconditioned for itself. Before that time its energy must be largely used up in indignation, or in the narrow defining of issues. This was Koheleth's handicap. In the first great historic conflict between Hebraism and Hellenism, his it was, in the sanity of his cosmic insight, to stand in the breach, fighting back the wave of vain speculation which was threatening to sweep the Jewish soul away from its ancient moorings. It was indeed the encounter of Zion with

The handicap of Koheleth's reactionary attitude.

Greece.[1] But in his peculiar tactics and temper the issue was joined rather by flank than by centre; it was the battle of what was organic and permanent in Hebraism against what in Hellenism was ephemeral and fallacious. A thankless task it was, therefore, on Koheleth's part, and little understood; the heroic strain of it on so large a scale that to valet minds it might not appear at all. Nor could Koheleth's purposed victory, though ever so decisive, be so much a triumph as a necessary check and corrective. He was compelling a new influence of the age, in some aspects good, perhaps, but still exotic, to present its passport; but just because of this strange issue, he was freer to let in the foe, so far as the invasion could be welcomed as a broadening. This is what, to a degree, comes about from his dealings with the Hellenizing tendencies of his century.

The Greek spirit, after all, is no monopoly of a nation. It has primal and native rights in life. The soul is impoverished without it. Pure He-

[1] This great world-battle, which was bound to come some time, seems to be rather vaguely recognized in the passage, Zechariah ix. 12, 13, from which this phrase is taken: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man."

braism, with its uncompromising insistence on law and obligation, and without some more genial spirit to work with it, limbering up life and making it more flexible and liberal, is an iron régime, unthankful and unlovely. No wonder the dull routine of it set Koheleth crying, "Vanity of vanities, what profit?" No wonder the Jew of the night of legalism hailed an influence that promised relief. When the Greek invaded Palestine, he came bearing gifts of value, if only the sage could be found who would appropriate them wisely and separate dross from ore. And this, I think, is the service of Koheleth's wisdom and courage to his generation. He is stanchly Hebrew; and yet when he has dealt with the situation, somehow it is no longer unrelieved Hebraism. It has taken on elements of beauty and grace. He has found the point of contact where the Hellenic spirit may be applied, frankly and confidently, to life. Like the Greek, he believes in joy and sunshine. He will eat and drink with merry heart; he will at every season have his garments white and oil on his head not lacking; he will cast himself, in the abounding spirit of youth, upon a large and uncircumscribed existence. But unlike the Greek, and far nearer the core of being, he will make sure of something solid to rejoice in, and

What good elements he recognizes in the Greek spirit of his time.

Survey vii. 1, 2; v. 143.

Survey vii. 8.

keep the windows of the spirit open, and in every pleasure be sure that his heart is guiding in wisdom, and remember that this is a world not only of joy but of judgment. His steady pull at the ascetic rein, which of course we cannot deny, is no kill-joy menace; it resolves itself into a plea for a tempered energy, a wise foresight, that the soul may build herself more stately mansions. It does not contemplate a less interesting and zestful plane of being, but rather interest in more worthy and substantial things, things that, because they are interwoven with man's livelihood and ordained portion, may redeem the most prosaic no less than the most favored existence. The kingly soul is writing for the laborer; and his counsel is in effect a plea for advance along the whole line of life, to an inner world where with the joy of its eating and drinking there is left no Damocles threat, no serpent of vanity and disillusion to bite the heels.

Thus, whether aware how much he is doing or not, Koheleth is responding to what is wholesome in the genial promise of his time; is going forth, as it were, to meet the Greek spirit halfway, and lead it hospitably into the ordered steadiness of the Hebrew house; admitting a liberalized spirit to alliance with a more sound and sacred letter. Not all reactionary, then, he is concerned rather to revise

An authentic alliance of the Greek and the Hebrew strains of life.

and deepen the treaty which his age is so allured to make. And when thus the Hebrew strain strikes hands with the Greek, life need not be a plodding pedestrian thing; there are well-grounded resources to give it zest and joy, heroism and endurance, even in the midst of its tasking round.

IV

This resolving of exotic influences was, however, only an incidental part of Koheleth's contribution to the work of Wisdom. The part that ploughed most deeply into manhood character was his dealing with the Hebrew situation and spirit from within. Standing, as we have noted, at the point to which all the influences of the matured Mosaic dispensation converge, he shows the very age and body of the time its form and pressure; this is his work in Wisdom. "One of the tasks of the old economy," says Professor Davidson, "was to drill holes in itself, to begin making breaches along the whole circumference of the material wall that bounded it — by the Law to die to the Law. And none were busier agents in these operations than the Wise." Nor of the Wise, we may add, were there any more fearless and radical, and at the same time more tenderly sympathetic, than Kohe-

Koheleth's most radical character building done from within the Hebrew economy.

See page 18, above.

Biblical and Literary Essays, by A. B. Davidson, page 71.

leth. In that encompassing atmosphere of legalism and universal subjection he moves with the assured strength of a master, using its influences without being used by them, drawing out of the time spiritual powers and graces that avail for all time, as he seeks "what is the good thing for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life."

By the law to die to the law, this is the spirit of the sages' endeavor. We may name it a movement toward emancipation. Let us trace the phases and gradations of this, as Koheleth's counsels shape out of it a growth of wisely ordered character.

Phases and gradations.

It begins with the manly poise which comes from discounting the situation as it is; the reaction, as I have called it, equal to the pressure exerted upon it. The situation is grave enough, and Koheleth has not spared words in setting it forth; without recalling details, we may sum it up in what St. Paul pictures as "the creation subjected to vanity, not of its own will." Once clearly recognized, how shall this alien will, this universal subjection, be met? Obviously there are degrees in bondage. There are ways of shifting the burden to the other shoulder, or changing position, or bringing into exercise another set of

1. The manly poise of accepting the situation and being equal to it.

Romans viii. 20.

muscles, which may do much to make an irksome condition more bearable. In all these there may lurk some spirit of insincerity; some sour rebellion, or servility, or evasion, or time-serving. But surely, too, there must be feasible some way of large and noble living, the stronger for the pressure consciously encountered. Koheleth's type of manhood proves its fibre here. It is a manhood neither deprecatory nor disloyal, nursing at its core neither slavishness nor cunning.

Survey v. 40-50.

Before the powers that be, both seen and unseen, Koheleth will have his man stand erect and dignified; leaving not his place if the spirit of the ruler rises against him; marveling not at the crookedness of the world; keeping a cool head as to the real issues of life; not suffering himself to be unhorsed either by the spectre of vanity on the one side or by the witching vision of futurity on the other. In the midst of it all he is to be a world, a law, to himself, accepting his universe and using it.

Survey vi. 41.

Survey iii. 85.

And the secret of it is, that the régime of law, its good as well as its limitation, is fairly interpreted and measured. Koheleth has not necessarily to throw away his dispensation because he has come to see wherein its potencies are exhausted. There is a nobler

Motived by the seasoned insight of wisdom.

way of dying to law, the way of law itself, whereby the order of things, vital and cosmic, becomes ingrained in the functions of life. For the impulse to obey is as real and normal as the impulse to transgress; nay, in a spirit trained by wisdom to identify law with reason, it is more so. Nor is there less of the heroic and adventurous spirit in loyally accepting the universe, baffling as it is felt to be, than in supinely submitting to be crushed by it, or in trying by some unmanly evasion to crawl out from under its obligations. Vanity in the world is best encountered by substance in the heart.

Herein, I think, is Koheleth's fundamental contribution to the theorem of living: to announce, after all his excursions through the abysmal deeps of the world, that wisdom, identifiable with integral and law-abiding character, meets the situation better than anything else. "Wisdom giveth strength to the wise man, more than ten chieftains that are in the city." "The refuge of wisdom is as the refuge of money; but the advantage of knowledge is, that wisdom quickeneth its possessor." Hence it is that though Koheleth is frankly skeptical, he is not infidel; and his final counsel to fear God and keep His commandments, so far from reading, as the critics assert, like a correc-

How wisdom embodies itself in character.

Survey v. 1; iv. 77.

tive tail added by some redactor to save the book's orthodoxy, is the very crown of his logic, the duty in which his unitary concept of manhood is best summed up. All the great features of his thought he punctuates, so to say, with the fear of God; God's will, God's majesty, God's law, bowed to in silent reverence, is the court of final appeal. But on the lower plane, too, obedience to authorized commands, from whatever source they emanate, is in Koheleth's counsel the safe and sane attitude of a life lived in our bounds of circumstance. His relation to his being's law, in sum, to authority expressed in whatever recognizable form, is a distinct adumbration of the master spirit who later said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Epilogue, 19.

See Survey iv. 101, note.

Survey v. 40, 47.

Matthew iii. 15.

This attitude of loyal obedience, however, goes only a little way toward making up Koheleth's relation to his régime of law; not far enough, indeed, to chime with the general tone of the book, which is by no means so tame as this would connote. His spiritual key is a tone higher, and in bolder instrumentation. In fact, law as such, though its presence is felt all the while, does not come up for mention, any more than would breathing or diges-

The situation shifted from law to fate.

tion in the bodily life. Adjustment to law is a manhood function; and there is an end of it. He takes for granted, in other words, that human nature is in fair enough working order to respond to the best counsels. But what shall the manhood soul do if the régime itself is out of joint? There is the rub, the very core of Koheleth's assessment of the world. Like Job before him, though on another count, he has reached the point where he, a mortal man, is large enough to criticise his universe; he has got a view of its seamy side. And his sweeping indictment of vanity goes deep. It is not that man does not get pay for living; not that his being's law is unjust. He *can* get what he supremely wants, but when it is secured to the full, it is an inevitable disappointment, a misfit. It is his fate to have before him an eternally unattained goal of living. "All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet is the soul not filled." All the rewards after which he strives — food, wealth, honor, family — turn out always to be no reward at all, to leave the work unpaid, the soul hungry. Not in these, nor in any earthly thing, is its fated satisfaction. Yet on earth if anywhere, in this life if ever, must its blessedness be obtainable. "Though one live a thousand years twice told, and see not good, —

See Job ix. 19-24; xxiii. 3-7.

Survey iv. 26.

Survey iv. 23.

are not all going to one place?" Here, then, is the more deeply seen situation to which Koheleth's attitude must be related: the soul of man too large for its universe, yet seeing no way out.

The one resource available is the one that Koheleth takes. "Heaven," as a poet says, "opens inward." The soul is thrown back upon itself. For the good of life it is not at the mercy of time and environment. For the rewards of living it is above the standard even of subservience to an externally imposed law. It can take up its abode calmly, and find its joy, before the most tyrannous enigma of fate. "Contemplate the work of God; for who can straighten what He hath made crooked? In the day of good be in good heart; and in the evil day consider: — this also hath God made, over against that, to the end that man should not find out anything after him." The soul can command the situation, because its world, its eternity, its treasure, is within.

The heaven of the intrinsic soul.

Survey iv. 83; cf. also Survey i. 10.

> "Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
> Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
> For man is man and master of his fate."

The cheery discounting of consequence, with its accompanying consciousness of initiative, has a notable reflex effect in Koheleth's counsels, on his attitude toward his régime of subjection and

obedience. There is a way of treating the law of life as if one were no longer an apprentice, learning and practicing it as it were by arbitrary rule and blundering, but a virtuoso, a master-workman, in whose procedure the rule is swallowed up in skilled proficiency. Not only has the law of being become so ingrained, so instinctive, that he has become dead to it; he has passed beyond it into the realm of that self-moved individuality which has been expressively called "the higher lawlessness."[1] Something like this is meant, I think, in the much discussed precepts not to be too righteous nor too wicked, not to let your wisdom stick out too much, and not to let your wickedness be a piece of stupidity. Koheleth has explored wisdom and folly, has had his apprenticeship in righteousness and wickedness, has traversed the domain of law and touched bottom. The elements of character are to him a keen-edged working-tool, the ready instrument of his will and his spirit. He knows in himself just what use to put them to, can employ them as it were to make life a work of artistry. He has the same attitude toward rules of life that the grizzled

2. The step upward from obedience to wise self-direction.

Survey iv. 93-102.

[1] Brierly, *Problems of Living*, page 257. "The passage of the conscious into the instinctive is ever the sign of advance." *Ib.* page 281.

old general has toward rules of strategy, which he can break all to pieces in order to gain his victory, or that Beethoven has toward the canons of his music art, which on his way to a supreme achievement of genius he can royally discard, to the dismay of the pedants. Koheleth, too, is large enough to bowl the laws of righteousness about as if they were things to be domesticated and domineered, rather than groveled under and dreaded; nor will he shun, in the interests of spiritual mastery, to make wise use of the darker elements of being. "It is good that thou lay hold on this, and from that, too, refrain not thy hand, for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all." Here is struck a higher keynote than the legalistic; it is the individual, the spiritual, the wisely self-directive, surging up into expression. Law need not remain an awkward, mechanical, alien thing; it can be tempered and proportioned into fine issues, into an artistic masterpiece of character. And so, in the fear of God, it should be.

Survey iv. 99.

Thus a vein in Koheleth which has been superficially interpreted into a rakish lawlessness, or a paring down of conduct into a "golden mean," is seen when connected with its motive principle to yield a much loftier ideal of character, an ideal which presses hard to transcend the established standard of its

3. The still higher impulse toward surplusage, overflow, of character.

Mosaic dispensation. And that this is the true significance of it is increasingly evident when we coördinate with it Koheleth's profound dealings with the problem of *yithrōn*, profit, which as we have seen plays so large a part in his interrogation of life. The great poverty of his dispensation, so congealed in legalism, is its lack of overflow, surplusage, initiative, freedom, self-moved individuality, in a word the spirit of life; — it takes many names to express it all, because the large fact covers so many aspects of an effete era, a dead centre, a nodal point in manhood evolution. This lack distributes itself into all the regions of being; its chilling influence invades character too. And from the way Koheleth's practical mind lays hold of it, and weaves the corrective of it into conduct, we see how in him the manhood spirit is awake, mewing its mighty youth, reaching out dimly after larger areas of being. So this, so far as one man's sturdy counsels can reveal, is the auroral promise of a new era. It infuses into the springs of action that creative *Trieb* of human nature which Browning, in one of its aspects, thus describes: —

See pages 34-36, above.

"Man, — as befits the made, the inferior thing, —
Purposed, since made, to grow, not make in turn,
Yet forced to try and make, else fail to grow, —
Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp and gain
The good beyond him, — which attempt is growth, —

The Ring and the Book, I. 705-727.

> Repeats God's process in man's due degree,
> Attaining man's proportionate result,—
> Creates, no, but resuscitates, perhaps.
> Inalienable, the arch-prerogative
> Which turns thought, act — conceives, expresses too!
> No less, man, bounded, yearning to be free,
> May so project his surplusage of soul
> In search of body, so add self to self
> By owning what lay ownerless before, —
> So find, so fill full, so appropriate forms —
> That, although nothing which had never life
> Shall get life from him, be, not having been,
> Yet, something dead may get to live again,
> Something with too much life or not enough,
> Which, either way imperfect, ended once:
> An end whereat man's impulse intervenes,
> Makes new beginning, starts the dead alive,
> Completes the incomplete and saves the thing."

Browning has poetic creation in mind, and gives his thought accordingly the more transcendental turn. Koheleth, whose purview is no whit less spacious or poetic, by applying his ideal to the pedestrian domain of conduct, runs the risk of disguising its depth, and shows a stolid carelessness of literary charm. Nevertheless, the great background is there, identical in principle with that of the poet and the artist. The need of a surplusage of soul, a residuum of manhood not inspired by reward, is making itself felt. A true creative impulse is at work, laying the foundation of a wisdom and character אַז יֹתֵיר, "beyond the demand," crowding the veins of a decrepit dispensation with a

Survey i. 83.

fullness of life which at once glorifies it and surges up to the very borders of a new spiritual era wherein the expression of manhood is spontaneous and self-directive.

How, then, is this surplusage of soul, this making of obedience more than obedience, projected into the practical things of life?

Applied to practical details of counsel.

One way we have seen: that lordly taking of liberties with law which evinces not the spirit of transgression or rebellion, nor of reducing conduct to a golden mean, so much as a spirit within, which by taking the wise charge of life into its own hands reinforces and vitalizes the letter. Its principle is the same as that of the athlete, who trains more severely than he has occasion for in the contest; or of the bridge-builder, whose works are tested to much greater strain than the utmost of actual usage will ever approach. Another way, very marked throughout the book, is seen in Koheleth's endeavor, as he goes along, to secure from every experience its elements of wisdom and profit. "The surplus that giveth success," as he says of a homely labor-saving device, "is wisdom." It is as if, like our Lord after him, he were going over the plain obligations of life one by one and saying, "If you do it only for pay,

Page 135, above.

Survey vi. 69.

Luke vi. 32-34; xvii. 10.

or as task-work, what thank have ye? Ye are unprofitable servants." Especially noteworthy is the constant meliorism of his counsel, his habit of balancing alternatives in order to inculcate the better course. In a crooked world, for example, full of injustice and oppression, wherein mere existence suggests a choice between evils, he brings common sense to the problem, and points out what, in society and solitude, in state and church, in worship and vows and general poise of mastery, the wiser alternative is. Again, where the man is brought to confront that crookedness of fate which cannot be straightened, Koheleth introduces a series of alternatives, miscellaneous indeed, but having a common object of soul culture and fortifying, to the end that, standing up in intrinsic worth, the man may present a nobler front to the universe. That the soul may lay the foundations of honor and beauty, that the heart may become fair, that character may grow in quiet sanity of wisdom, — objects like these seem to be in Koheleth's mind in praising the house of mourning and the experience of sorrow and the day of death. Strange such hints of asceticism as these would appear, from one who has found nothing better than to eat and drink and

Cf. Survey vi. 35-60.

Survey iii. 32-82.

Survey iv. 46-80.

Survey iv. 46.

Survey iv. 54, 58.

Survey iv. 49, 47.

rejoice in labor, until we realize that through it all he is seeking to emancipate the soul from its pressure of law and prescription by opening to it a world wherein it may prove itself worthy to command its own law of being. He is, in a word, so training man in assured wisdom of character that all unawares, perhaps, man is in the way to outgrow his era.

One more adumbration of the larger impulse of being, the natural comrade of what we have described, must not fail of mention. As Koheleth's body of counsel nears its end, the tendency to transcend the prescriptive warrant becomes more marked, until we note therein a disposition to venture on uncertainties, to embark on new enterprises, to bear weight on native soundness, which is very like faith. St. Paul, we will remember, looking back over the progressive Old Testament era, says the Law was a schoolmaster to lead man up to the point where faith, not dead obligation, should be the determining attitude of life. It is natural to suppose that as this legal tutelage approached the epoch of graduation, signs of the adult life impulse would appear. And this is what we trace in Koheleth's maturing counsel. The familiar passage about casting bread upon the waters, for instance, which has

4. The initial stages of faith.

Galatians iii. 24.

Survey vi. 90.

been so misread as an inculcation of charity, is rather a rudimental expression of the faith impulse; containing as it does a spirit so expansive and confident, as compared with the general spirit of the period, that we read it almost as a New Testament precept. The counsel about sowing seed morning and evening, with which the Sixth Survey terminates, and in a negative way the little group of maxims about observing clouds and winds, and about disregarding the evil chances that inhere in every venture, are in the same vein. It is all a distinct incitement, direct or implied, to strike out, and take chances, and bear weight on the promises of life. It is far above a quarry-slave bondage; it is more even than a loyal obedience that we see here; and yet there is in it no tinge of reluctance or rebellion; it is the wreaking of surplus energies on life, a committal to the unfulfilled promises of action, in a venture of faith.

Survey vi. 103.

Survey vi. 97.

Survey vi. 51-60.

In the culminating points of the book it is, however, that we feel most distinctly how true and strong a pulsation of faith inspired Koheleth's body of thought. We feel it, I say; for it comes to us rather by the spirit than by the letter. Notable first in those groups of essentially identical counsels, like succes-

The height to which this faith cumulates.

sive and cumulative waves, to which the various Surveys lead up. The eating and drinking which are always brought into these counsels to accompany the joy in labor are the symbol not of reactive animalism nor of sour recklessness, but of confidence, that confidence wherein, having found his congenial element, man can dismiss care and foreboding and let life as it were live itself. Nor does it stop with faith in one's ordained portion. Most notable of all in this faith dialect is the counsel with which the last Survey, and so the whole book, culminates, that robust call to young manhood which expresses nothing less than faith in the fundamental soundness of human nature.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,
And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy young manhood;
And walk thou in the ways of thy heart, Survey
And in the sight of thine eyes; xii. 8 sqq.
And know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment;
And remove sorrow from thy heart,
And put away evil from thy flesh;
For youth and the morn of life are vanity."

That this strikes an essentially new note, even in the counsels of Wisdom, we may see from the reflection that none of Job's friends, those austere croakers of total depravity, would ever have dared to give a young man such rein. Koheleth puts his

stamp on this period of life as the most typical and representative ; bids man, just while the blood courses warm and red and the heart bounds high in hope and courage, to let himself go, as it were, and be a man in wisdom ; bids him remember his Creator then, as the Creator of the full and free manhood life, then, before the days of senility and disillusion come. The safe years of life, after all, are the years of the enthusiasms and enterprises, the years wherein the healthy young manhood soul eliminates its sorrows and poisons and looks for the verdict of judgment ; the dangerous years are the years when the vital powers are going the other way, when pleasures pall, when clouds return after rain, when the blanch of disillusion is on everything. In those dangerous years it is, not in ascending and growing years, that the strong asset of life, the stay and refuge already confirmed, should be mindfulness of the Creator. This is the genuine idiom of faith ; it is committed to a vision, we may almost say, of the Son of man ; only the Christ toward which it is dimly leading expresses Himself in terms of the universal man, the Christ, so to say, who begins His leadership by smiting His wholesome spirit into the livelihood of the carpenter and Galilean. Have faith in your essential manhood ; when Koheleth can rise to this height of counsel, he is not far from the fullness of the times.

V

Yet with all this, tonic and noble as it is, we feel a nameless lack, like a lost chord in the music, a something striving to reveal itself as it were by an *argumentum e silentio*. After all that a reactive and reinforcing vigor can rescue from a universe of law, the fact of vanity remains as palpable as ever; and the book, one of the bravest books in the world, is one of the saddest. Some motive more triumphant still is needed to deal with the intractable enigma of being. What this is, Koheleth himself knows as little as do his contemporaries; he knows only, in his sense of the dearth of surplusage, that there is somehow a lack in the order of things. Yet his sympathy and heartache, his yearning to help man in his ill-paid labor, are an eloquent witness to it. He has learned to be kindly with his kind. But he has not learned that this very kindliness, so far from being a monopoly of his own, springs from that deep motive of existence which is the very key and completion to it all. It is struggling there blindly, in his own heart, almost ready to announce itself; but his uplook from below, his sense of pressure from God and the world above, so hems his view that he cannot bring it out strong into the working vocabulary of humanity.

Yet something lacking, when the best is said.

Epilogue, 1.

What the supreme lack of Koheleth's interpretation is.

We, however, are in more favorable case. Looking back from our sunlit region, and giving freer play to the promptings of the spirit, we have been made aware that what is lacking is an essential reversal of spiritual impulse; the outward current we may call it; that supreme overflow of being which merges self-interests in larger issues. The motive of love, — of comradeship and sacrifice, of helpfulness and sympathy, of favor and chivalrous magnanimity, that free impulse of action, which does not think of subjection to law at all because, as love of God and neighbor, law is doing its perfect work as if it were an instinct, — this is sadly, conspicuously absent. We look for the throb of it in Koheleth's counsels, and while there are signs that it is stirring blindly in the underworld of the eternal human, it has not become conscious of its meaning and value, has not learned to wreak itself on its universe and teach men so. Instead of it every utterance, from beginning to end, is a more or less refined expression of regard for the main chance; its current is selfward. How to stand up under the pressure and be a man, integral and intrinsic, this is his main problem; but he has not yet reached that grace-inspired consciousness of being wherein the pressure is removed altogether. Whatever vital virtue both Hebraism and

Hellenism can yield he has laid hold of and transmuted nobly into character: has as a stanch son of Mosaism brought a fine Stoic fortitude to his acceptance of the universe, and with Epicurean cheer no less real has rejoiced in the portion wherein he can eat and drink and make his home. Yet the pressure remains; and his attitude toward it has hardly risen above that of a servant, albeit a servant faithful and wise, doing well what it is in his stewardship to do. The later stage of spiritual development, still closed to him with all his era, will admit him, conscious partner with God, into the secrets of His presence and spirit, no more servant but friend.

VI

In getting at the involvements and relations of Koheleth's thought, we have been obliged to fetch so wide a compass that there is need, perhaps, by way of summary, to detach its central and distinguishing elements and exhibit them in more compendious mass together. Let us, then, as the final section of this chapter, inquire what place these concepts of the world and of character give Koheleth in the large map of life.

Koheleth's place in the map of life.

In this felicitous phrase of the historian Lecky we may characterize the work of the succession

of Wisdom writers, Koheleth with the rest, who traced their literary paternity to Solomon. They were endeavoring, each according to his time and sense of occasion, to construct the map of life. This map, according to the fundamental spirit of Wisdom, they laid out on the practical projection; not as designed or dictated from a mount of revelation, but as the exploration and discovery of sound sense and experience. As this experience became more differentiated and refined, and as the inner history of the nation contributed its share, the various tracts and bounds of the map were more accurately determined; the Wisdom becoming, if less absolute and sweeping in its conclusions, more close-fitting and vital. Such is in outline the development of the Hebrew Wisdom, or philosophy, through those leading books which remain to us as its chief monuments.

The Hebrew sages exploring and surveying for a map of life.

As it came to men in its first broad discoveries, represented in the large by the Book of Proverbs, and in compendium by the friends of Job, Wisdom was concerned mainly with establishing a great central truth which we may call the Newtonian law of the whole system: namely, that righteousness in the fear of God, which the law and the prophets already enforce as vital religion, is also the essence of wis-

The primal tissue of Wisdom, as represented in the Book of Proverbs.

dom, a workable principle for the guidance of life; and conversely, that he who scorns God and follows his own base nature or lawless will is not only a sinner but a fool, — is taking the way of madness and failure. This axiom of the philosophy of life, identifying the truth of the work-day with the truth of the sanctuary, takes its place in the sages' counsels as something that cannot be shaken. However bewildered the soul of Job may be, he always keeps fast hold on this, as the sheet anchor of his integrity. However sweeping Koheleth's criticism of things, he never calls this in question; a main object of his, indeed, is to verify it. Along with this law, in the early Wisdom, went also its sanction and sequel: namely, that wisdom gets the rewards of life, its wealth, its comforts, its honors, its length of days; and conversely, that the sinner, the fool, comes to disaster and destruction. Here was a plain philosophy, on which in general man might depend; expansive too, and flexible, as life's rewards and retributions were interpreted as more inner and spiritual. Life built on this principle is well built.

Job xxvii. 6; xxviii. 28.

But as years went on, and this philosophy was applied to the concrete case, there ensued a period of discrimination and skepticism. The issues of life, as thus determined, did not always seem to balance up even; nor was the character thereby

engendered altogether desirable. To say nothing of the exceptions to the law of reward and punishment, which became so numerous as to invalidate the rule, there seemed to be fostered a certain strain of hardness, in spirit and motive, a dominant regard for self-interest, at which the noblest manhood instinct, pausing in a kind of dismay, was moved to enter protest. Time and growing insight were proving that a screw was loose somewhere in this matter of sanctions and sequels; new adjustments must be made, new definitions of things devised.

The ensuing period of discrimination and skepticism.

The first vital attack on the Wisdom system, as given in the Book of Job, was none the less valid for being delivered by Satan. It urged that this baldly sanctioned principle makes it directly possible for life to be a brazen barter and commercialism; the fear of God and righteous living being merely an investment put forth for the profit it will yield. The question is raised whether a man will serve God when he is not paid for it; whether his goodness and piety — otherwise his character — are something manufactured for sale, as it were, and with reference to a reward which is essentially an outside matter, or whether there is something intrinsic in manhood, an unbought and inalienable

The first criticism, as made by the Book of Job.

integrity of life. In the person of Job, as he survives the utmost fury of disease and bereavement and spiritual darkness, the answer, pronounced triumphantly for man's godlikeness as intrinsic, raises the standard of manhood to an immeasurably higher plane; and the map of life is greatly ennobled and enlarged.

The further criticism, as embodied in the Words of Koheleth.

In our Book of Koheleth the new question that is in virtual control is, What is that thing reward after all — that object to which all life and labor are so prevailingly keyed? Everything that we can eat and wear and build and work for is vanity; it brings satiety, but also inevitable disillusion and disappointment. It does not *pay* for any outlay of contrivance or endeavor. The blanch of decay, the stamp of the transitory, is on the whole of it. What is that good thing for man, that may be his joy all the days of his life? *Can* we reach anything that may be called profit, residuum, reward, at all? and especially when we have no choice but a life of labor, of desperate struggle, to keep body and soul together? And the answer, no less tonic than austere, is, Look for nothing better than you can get right at hand, in the work that embodies your best powers, your creative impulse, your life's interests and ideals. On this you may lay out, not only the capacity to enjoy, which is God-

given, but the mysterious pulsation of eternity in your heart, which derives from the illimitable powers of life.

Thus both these radically searching books, which indeed have been definitely classed as skeptical, make their way by forcing that primal law of Wisdom inward to the intrinsic citadel of character; not denying manhood nor impairing it, but deepening it, by making it a spiritual thing. In Job it is disengaged from selfish commercialism, and centred in intrinsic integral godlikeness. In Koheleth it is rescued just as it is ready to flee for its reward to another world, and centred in that work and portion, with its attendant joy, which, on whatever time it falls or in what vain environment soever, *makes* its own heaven. Our map of life is by this time a goodly domain, fair, diversified, deeply explored.

How these books deepen life in the direction of the spiritual.

All this, however, noble as it is, has revealed only one hemisphere. That is why, with all its tonic cheer, Koheleth's book still remains so pathetically sad. The Christ-bearing dove, the Christopher Columbus of spiritual exploration, has not yet uncovered the west. We can realize this now, looking over from our more illumined hemisphere. St. John, it will be remembered, not many gen-

But only in one hemisphere of being, as later explorations reveal.

erations later, draws a new map of life, on the spiritual, which is the adult manhood projection, in his words, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And St. Paul records the result of the later expedition, in his assertion that therein for the first time life, and its correlate immortality, were brought to light; a life which, by coming out full-orbed and furnished, announces itself as an eternal thing, aware of its future in the evolutionary course.

John i. 17.

2 Timothy i. 10.

There is a life of law, demanding its dues natural, social, and cosmic; a life of work and livelihood, of enterprise and endurance, into which all our legitimate self-interests are concentrated. This life has its noble ideals of integrity and right, of "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control;" and no jot or tittle can pass from it or be omitted till all be fulfilled in soundness of manhood. Still, it is only half of life. It is self-limited; its regards, after however ample a circuit, return eventually to their starting-point. What wealth of ideal and upbuilding such life engenders is merely the comely furnishing of that half; it cannot by any fullness so flow over into the other hemisphere as to complete the manhood creation. The Book of Koheleth may be commended as the highest word,

The furnishing of this hemisphere, as Koheleth's counsels reveal.

on the whole, that can be said for this hemisphere of being, the life of wise self-interest working out its being's law. All the prudences, the economies, the thrift, the industry, the good sense, the tact of word and silence, the proud subordination to lot, which self-respect and self-integrity dictate, on our way through an exacting world, come to light here as a practical sanity and level head. The book, we may say, points out the fairest result that would come if men were to obey the injunction, Let this mind be in you which was also in Benjamin Franklin. It moves in that matter-of-fact region which, as another state of being is not clearly in sight, will make the most of this.

Now this, when we compare it with some ideals of life, is nothing short of noble. Omar Khayyám, whose thoughts of life are in the same vein, reveals what is in his soul by saying, "In a moment we die and are no more; we cannot wrest any clear knowledge of the beyond from doctors and saints; things are crooked and there is no setting them straight; therefore let us drink wine, and loaf in rose-gardens with women, and be lazy." Koheleth shows his deeper and sturdier fibre, his truer judgment of the intrinsic man, by saying, "Yes, all this about dying, about our ignorance of the future, about our futile efforts to straighten a crooked

Compared with Omar Khayyám.

world, is true, too true ; therefore let us take joy in the work we can do, and follow the dim prompting of eternity in our heart, and stand undismayed before our fate, and fear God." Then, whatever is or is to be, we have gained what our moment of being was given us for, we have secured the one thing of which we could be sure, and the surety of this nothing can take away.

A thought of the other hemisphere.

Only half of life, we have said, only one hemisphere in the map of full-orbed existence. When we think of the other half, the tremendous consummation that has come with the inflowing, or rather the overflowing, of grace and its spiritual initiative, we become aware how incomplete it is after all, how majestic was the event when Christ, setting up the outward current of love in life, transported manhood to an exalted region where law is dead, or rather risen glorified to the law of the spirit of life. It is in that sacrificial spirit alone that the profoundest life-values are embodied ; in self-impelled, free-moving grace alone that is reached the full play of the manhood character, the essential truth of being. When love is actuating, not only are the obligations met ; the work into which is already woven the joy of skill and creative achievement glories into a divine end and use ; it is fitted in, however lowly its tools and workshop, with

the great life-giving, steadily building work of God.

If, however, we must leave Koheleth in the twilight hemisphere, we can still say this: he is on the frontier nearest the great continent of light. We think again of the Epicurean man, the loafer of Omar Khayyám's rose-garden, and our Koheleth ideal looks no more paltry but strong and comely. There is not enough of Omar's man to build a structure of grace and truth upon. Of Koheleth, however, we may say: taking what his era can see, and using it for the highest value he has yet the standard to measure, he is directing the life of law to the integral fullness where it is best fitted to take on, as its supplement, the spirit of grace and truth. As we look back to the Old Testament dispensation, and think what readiness it is making for the dispensation of the Son of Man, we seek for some point where, like the ball of the gamester, manhood, though only partly developed, shall be left in position for the next play. This is what Koheleth defines for us. He has nobly forced the soul away from speculative dreams to the permanent values of the life which is; so when grace and truth come, to supplement the life which gains and thrives by the life which loves and imparts, they have something solid on which to build.

Koheleth at the point nearest the frontier of the other hemisphere.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY SHAPING

OF the fortune which has befallen this Book of Koheleth since it was first given to the world, no phenomenon has been so remarkable as the extraordinary diversity of interpretation which has gathered round it. Every new expositor has deemed himself bound, at the first step, to throw away all the conclusions of his predecessors. Every new generation has contemplated the book from a different angle, or has seen therein its own prevailing attitude toward the universe reflected in a different way. All this betokens, of course, that the tissue of the book is complex, with points of contact for each advancing age to lay hold of and appropriate. But that it is therefore not homogeneous, not unitary, — well, this is a matter to be subjected to test as an open question, not asserted or assumed from superficial impression. And the only way to get at the decision is by the careful putting of part and part together in the ascertained spirit of the whole book. One

Diverse interpretations and the cause of them.

result of that "speaking out in meeting" which has so marked its effect has been that all shades of bias and unconformity, having seen their own face therein, have proceeded to reconstruct the whole body of the thought in their own image. Nor has the book fared better at the hands of those to whom it was suspect. They too have tried to account for its supposed aberrations by some strange inverted system which without tolerance or sympathy they have created to mould it in. It is evident that the judgment of its literary shaping has depended largely, perhaps mainly, on the point of view which the interpreter's mind or the spirit of his creed has dictated for it.

Favorableness of the present age to a fair interpretation.

All this is as it must be; nor has the present interpreter any disposition to put himself outside the category. A point of view this Study also has, from which the texture and framework of the book are judged; and to say frankly that this point of view has been taken in sympathy, rather than in suspicion or hostility, is merely to say that Koheleth, whoever he was or whenever he wrote, has been assumed to be a man of good sense and good faith. From his era and range of insight he had acquired a combination of data which made his verdict of things reasonable, perhaps inevitable. Our business is to find his combination, his own point of

view. We have, I believe, a notable advantage here. His peculiar point of view is one which the spirit of our latest time contributes to make luminous and sane. As in other centuries, so now, the age may see in the book its own features reflected. The present Study is written in the conviction that now at the end of days Koheleth's counsels are eminently timely; and as it has advanced, the feeling has deepened that no former age, probably, has so nearly possessed Koheleth's combination as does our era of hospitable science, tolerant faith, honored industry. Surely, a generation which has found a gospel in Omar Khayyám may walk congenially with this nobler product of the same spiritual vein.

It remains, then, from Koheleth's point of view, to trace how the work before us has shaped itself as it were from within, and what vistas of thought and counsel have opened out from its central concept. Spenser's idea, as applied to a vital work of literature, is no mere poetical conceit, but a sound structural principle:—

The literary shaping to be traced from the soul of the book.

> "For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
> For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make."

Our study is essentially an inquiry how the soul of the book projects itself into form. The remark

has been made of Socrates that "his object was to impart not any positive system, but a frame of mind: to make men conscious of their ignorance, and of their need of enlightenment." If in like manner Koheleth, with that monitory caution which really means a more grounded faith, induces an accordant frame of mind, we are in the only true position to see how in each case this counsel should be given and not another, and how it belongs at this point, not otherwhere.

I

It is on this question of the soul of the book, however, that the age in which we live has been and still is much confused; working itself clear, perhaps, from old or hide-bound preconceptions. Let us first ask, then, where in general the expositors stand with reference to its body of thought and structure.

The soul of the book, as interpreted at the present day.

The present-day attitude toward Koheleth may be reckoned from a remark of Professor A. B. Davidson's in the "Encyclopædia Biblica." "It is only in comparatively modern times," he says, "that any real progress has been made in the interpretation of Ecclesiastes. The ancients were too timid to allow the Preacher to speak his mind. Modern inter-

Professor Davidson's account of it.

preters recognize a strong individuality in the book, and are more ready to accept its natural meaning, though a certain desire to tone down the thoughts of the Preacher is still discernible in some English works."

Encyclopaedia Biblica, s.v. Ecclesiastes.

This account of Professor Davidson's we may supplement in brief terms somehow thus: When the modern interpreters plucked up heart to let Koheleth speak his real mind, the first thing they discovered was that he was traversing many a traditional religious sentiment. They could not go on with the book, indeed, without seeming to reap from it whole crops of pessimism, agnosticism, Epicureanism, and other things of dubious, not to say distinctly dangerous, nature. Yet side by side with these, and apparently mocked by them, were equally flourishing growths of wise and pious precept. The book, in fact, from the point of view in which they were schooled, was not only out of unity with its scripture canon; it was not at unity with itself. To give it a reasonable consistency of tissue, one must needs assume, it seemed, either several minds or several moods of one mind engaged in the production of it. Between these two postulates, roughly speaking, we may regard the question of its interpretation as standing to-day.

The book's supposed lack of self-consistency.

The idea that a book so obviously inviting such an interpretation may be the work of several collaborating minds does not seem to have taken so speedy hold of the critical consciousness as the prevalent theories of syndicated bible-making would lead one to expect. The "strong individuality" of the book it was, perhaps, which kept it from dismemberment; at any rate, it remained for a surprisingly long time intact. The composite authorship bacillus has, however, arrived at last, and fortunately with so virulent effect that if Koheleth survives this attack, he will not be likely to suffer so severely again. Professor Siegfried, one of the latest German commentators, shall give the diagnosis. It is impossible, he says, — a rather absolute word, but he says it, — that the Book of Koheleth, as it lies before us, could have been the product of one mind. In his view it took anywhere from six to perhaps twenty men to get those twelve brief chapters into final running order. The man who composed the main body of the argument, whom he labels Q^1, was "a pessimistic philosopher, a Jew who had suffered shipwreck of faith." On reading his screed, Q^2, the Epicurean glossator, who evidently had a better digestion, endeavored to lighten the too insistent gloom of the book by inserting sundry

The composite authorship theory.

In Nowack's Handkommentar zum alten Testament.

praises of eating and drinking. Then Q^3, the sage glossator, tried to swing the thought into the line of the dominant philosophy by putting in pleas for wisdom. Whereat Q^4, the pietist glossator, grieved at the low spiritual tone of the book, slipped in certain gently corrective passages about judgment and worship and gifts of God. Of Q^5 there were several, who as they came along added to the growing cairn by casting in here and there contributions from the current stock of proverb literature. In addition to these numbered Q's, some further agency was required to correct proof, so to say, and prepare the work for its final appeal to posterity. It took two Redactors to do this, one to start the book and put in now and then a little more vanity, the other to end it; and in final addition to these, two appendices, from hands hitherto unclassed, to round out the epilogue. Thus the work, which looks and acts so much like literature as to deceive the very elect, turns out to have been evolved much after the manner of a city directory, with its revised issue for each new year's changes of residence and population; and no one will deny, who justly notes its vitality and influence, that it was a remarkable job.

Of such critical ingenuity as this the estranging feature is that it suggests something made outside and put on. It is not sympathetic; it

deals with the surface, rather than with the depths where thought and insight are at work shaping an inevitable utterance. One who has really entered into the heart of literary creativeness, beyond its mechanism and grammar, is moved to inquire if Professor Siegfried ever went to work in his critical laboratory and tried to *make* literature in that way. One would like to see the thing authentically done. Books that take living hold of men, that plough deep, to say nothing of books pulsing with two millenniums of vitality like this of Koheleth's, do not seem to fall together quite so fortuitously as this nowadays. When they do, we are inclined to accord to them the wonder due to freaks and marvels.

The essential difficulty of it.

If this elaborate scheme, or perhaps any scheme that postulates a patchwork of authorship, fails to carry its own evidence, it must be confessed we do not fare much better with the very prevalent theory, virtual if not avowed, of several untempered moods, or humors, of one author, expressing themselves each according to the headlong impulse of the moment. Some such assumption as this we must carry in mind, in reading such expositors as Dr. Samuel Cox and Dean Plumptre. They are willing to let Koheleth speak his mind, but they cannot always con-

The composite mood, or distraction theory.

In the Expositor's Bible, and in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

cede that he knows his mind. The baffling problems of the world, acting on his sensitive nerves, warp him out of his orbit; he loses his head and talks wildly. Accordingly, we find him at one moment "rising . . . to almost Christian heights of patience and resignation, and holy trust in the providence of God," the next moment "smitten by the injustice and oppressions of men into the depths of a pessimistic materialism." Dean Plumptre endeavors to motive this unstable equilibrium of the book by taking the name Koheleth to mean the Debater, and making the book accordingly the record not of a victory but of a conflict still in progress and uncertain. "The 'Two Voices' of our own poet were there," he says; "or rather, the *three* voices, of the pessimism of the satiated sensualist, and the wisdom, such as it was, of the Epicurean thinker, and the growing faith in God, were heard in strange alternation; now one, now another, uttering itself, as in an inharmonious discord, to the very close of the book."

Plumptre, Ecclesiastes, page 53.

This description of Dean Plumptre's has taken the world's fancy so that by it the thought of the book is assessed. Koheleth, popular expositors say, is the Hebrew Two Voices. Well, in Tennyson's poem of that theme one of the voices was discred-

The popular conception of it as the Hebrew Two Voices.

ited and silenced. Not so here, as men are estimating the book. We are at the mercy of the vein or humor that happens to be uppermost, with no resolving principle or spirit to make the final choice. The logic of one utterance may be, Do all that is implied in a life of self-indulgence ;[1] of another, Do all that is implied in the fear of God ; of still another, Yet be not too righteous or too wise. In short, we are left all abroad, with a pained idea that an accredited book of the scripture canon is somehow lending itself to making life a discord and delusion.

How this view connects with its time.

Of this distraction theory — as we may call it — a word more, before we leave it, should be said. It is a view left over from a time, now happily past, when Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold, Amiel and George Eliot, were brooding over enigmas of life and death ; when even minds predisposed to faith, like the Laureate Tennyson, were making such virtue of the faith that lives in honest doubt that their emphasized honesty almost created the doubts for the sake of the spiritual

[1] Of chapter ix. 9 (Survey v. 123), for instance, which he translates : " Enjoy life with any woman whom thou lovest," Dr. Cox says, " As the Hebrew preacher is here speaking under the mask of the lover of pleasure, this immoral maxim is at least consistent with the part he plays." — *The Expositor's Bible, Ecclesiastes*, page 100.

dead-lift of overcoming them. A time of tension and strain it seems to us now, as we look back upon it, a time not without a profound vein of morbidness; and interpreters of Koheleth, reading then by the light of their day, imbued the book with something of the same morbid hue. They had some reason, for the book is sad; from one point of view the saddest book in scripture. Its appeal to the spirit of that time was very searching. Still, the fact remains that it left the impression of an unresolved discord, of an unrelieved stress. A very different temper of things has succeeded, doubtless by wholesome reaction. The spiritual tension is much mitigated. Men are not so tired as they were. They are not thinking so much about what is going to happen to us after we die, not caring so much about it. They are more content to let problems be problems; are closing their In Memoriam and opening their Omar Khayyám. A wave of better cheer has swept over the world. And whether this connotes a sounder spiritual fibre and insight or not, certain it seems that a more tempered light on the spiritual landscape is putting things in new perspective and coloring.

The result, as we turn this later light on Koheleth, is to bring into the field of view an element of the book from which hitherto, as it would

seem, the world's eyes have been holden. And this is what we may call distinctively its element of solution, that other side of its problem in which the raveled threads are gathered up into a self-justifying fabric of counsel. The great lack in the view of the book hitherto, as it has been the lack of the questing ages, was some worthy goal of poetic justice to compensate for all its outlay of sad censure. It has seemed to leave men in a welter of turmoil and gloom. Nor has the matter been greatly alleviated by making it the record of shifting gales of mood; still less by regarding it as the hodge-podge of a set of timid and tinkering Q's. As the Scotchman said of his too mild dram, we "don't seem to get any forwarder." But meanwhile the age has been getting on, or perhaps has been settling back upon a saner evaluation of the intrinsic man, and of the compensating joys of man's work. There is a something, not vanity nor shivering doubt, to be secured as a solid asset of life here on earth; something so true to our higher manhood that we can afford, reckoning ourselves alive to it, to reckon ourselves dead to the chances of fate or destiny beyond. And turning to Koheleth we find the selfsame thing there, in plain sight, reached by our same spiritual approach, and insisted on as the only

How the newer time gives occasion to reopen the book.

solution available. Is it not worth while, then, to reopen his book and see how his thought as a body of thought stands related to this suggestion of poetic justice? It may turn out that we have the real key to his puzzling yet strangely vital book.

II

Let us begin with the ancient title. "Words of Koheleth, Son of David, King in Jerusalem;" — thus the author himself, whoever he was, heads his book. Choosing to call himself by a symbolical name, he so words his title as to identify himself with King Solomon. What has he done this for?

What is in the name.

If to this question we give the answer of the uncritical ages, Because he really was King Solomon, we raise more difficulties than we solve. He does not assume to be a king throughout; he drops the rôle as soon as certain practical uses of it are exhausted. Nor indeed does he speak *like* a king at all, still less as the historic Solomon would have spoken; and at the end, where the name occurs in the third person, he is called frankly what he has counted for all along, a sage who is concerned to teach the people knowledge. The disguise is too transparent even to cover an attempt to deceive. We may roundly say the authorship of the book

The assumption of Solomonic authorship.

Epilogue, 3.

is on the face of it assumed. While our thought is thereby directed to an historic personage, it is only, so to say, an emanation of that personage, only the thing which that personage may be held to symbolize, that we have any color for taking. And taking that, we have enough.

Its literary motive.

For the literary motive of that assumption, if such were sought, lies on the surface. In the name Solomon lay worlds of connotation for the Hebrew mind; implications of specific character quite apart from the general suggestion of royal dignity. The assumption of this authorship is merely the shorthand way of making these connotations available, conveying thereby much that is of prime importance yet need not be asserted at all. In two ways the thought is thus enriched.

The Solomonic resources for making a grand induction of life.

First, with the name Solomon is conveyed the thought of the Solomonic resources: his riches, and the power that these give him to do whatsoever he will, his freedom and boundless opportunity to sound the depths and shoals of life. An experiment in living, on the grandest scale, was required by the argument. Solomon, in the Hebrew consciousness, was the one historic personage who had the means and power, without stint, to carry such an experiment out. If a man of less commanding

resource than he had been represented as making it, some element of the problem might supposably have been omitted. If a man so ideally placed cannot reach a conclusive answer, no one can; if he can reach it, it is reached indeed. To the objection, here rising, that the value of these experiments in life depends on their having been actually made, and by an actual not a fictitious Solomon, it is, I think, a valid answer to say, the book was written in an era of ripened sentiment, wherein the great major premise, that all is vanity, had ceased to be, if it ever had been, a question of fact yet to be verified, and would pass without question as a universal truth. The Solomonic report, then, is rather illustrative than argumentative; it is merely a way of owning what every one in his heart knows to be true, that dust and disillusion are inherent in worldly ideals and pursuits, and in greater degree as the soul wreaks itself on the world more blindly.

This side of the Solomonic tradition is used only a little while, and then disappears. The kingly rôle is dropped as soon as the kingly moral is pointed, — an additional sign this, of the purely literary character of the assumption. A second connotation of the name, however, surviving, gives tacit classification to the whole book: the tradition of wisdom that for

The Solomonic connotation of Wisdom.

whatever reason has flowed down from the Solomonic age and court. This Book of Koheleth is a work of the Wisdom or Hokhma literature; the writer has only to stamp it with Solomon's name to say that. The Hebrews, as is well known, identified the great currents of their literary activity with historic names. Their legal code, with the histories attending its enactments, was fathered upon Moses; to the end of the chapter Moses — whether understood as actual personage or as spirit and power — was its originator. Their lyric poetry, whether pre-exilic or post-exilic, was similarly named from the traditional first sweet singer of Israel, David. Their body of practical wisdom, or as we should say philosophy, a philosophy whose later utterances may be almost contemporary with Christ, took the name of that large-hearted, inquiring, judicious king, Solomon. To identify the Book of Koheleth with Solomon, then, is not a crude attempt to deceive; it is a shorthand way of laying down its programme and character. The book exists, as we know from the very name of it, to gather practical lessons for life, lessons embodying wisdom, as Solomon long ago gave the impulse and model.

One more element of suggestion we get from the symbolical name Koheleth itself. Derived from the verb קָהַל, *to call together*, a name apparently

made for this particular use, and at a time when, because the language was a little archaic, it had to be manufactured, as it were, and retained still a kind of book-flavor; rounded off with a feminine termination though not construed with a feminine verb, apparently for the sake of an abstract significance, — the name, with these grammatical facts lying on the surface, has roused endless discussion. Does it mean one who calls people together in order to teach them, in other words an Ecclesiastes or Preacher, as the Authorized Version renders it; does it mean a Debater, equally responsive to all sides and moods, as Dean Plumptre with his distraction theory maintains; or does it mean one who culls or calls together utterances of wisdom into ordered collections, as Koheleth at the end of the book is represented as doing? These three, out of the multitude of queries, are all I need mention. On the whole we shall do best, I think, to stick to the name Koheleth without trying to translate it. If not luminous, it is at least not misleading. If I were to try for an equivalent, I should call to mind that kindly sage described in chapter xii., who, because he was wise, still brought the people knowledge from stores new and old, a character that shines out between the lines of the whole course of the thought.

Meaning of the name Koheleth.

Epilogue, 3-6.

The word that would most nearly name such a person, it seems to me, is Counselor. We feel throughout the argument that we are in the presence of a man who has made himself competent to sit in the gate, the centre of such groups as are interested to turn aside and listen to ripe counsel on the issues of life.

Connotation of the name Counselor.

If this is a just interpretation of the name and the man, one more note, not unimportant, may be drawn from it. A counselor is one who, being master of his audience, is presumably master of his own moods and thoughts. His very mission is to guide, to explain, to conduct from the puzzling and troubled to a clearer and solider landing-stage. This character accords best with the large tone and tenor of the book. It does not accord with a pessimistic muddle, nor with the frantic eddyings of a sentiment that is one thing when you feel this way and a totally discordant thing when you feel that way. I for one am not sorry it does not. The book may not be optimistic; no book of its unfinal era could well have the data for that. But it assuredly is melioristic; it is designed and carried out in the true spirit of wise counsel, the spirit of sound sense, helpfulness, uplifting. We feel it all in that description of the author at the end; we are heartened by it as we go along; we gather it not unfairly from the name.

III

From the title let us turn now to consider the motive and method of the book itself.

Motive and method of the book.

Like all the works of Wisdom literature, this book, calling itself simply "Words of Koheleth," makes no claim on a systematic order. The type of structure, if structure it can be called, that seems to have been conceived for all this class of works, a type exemplified most purely in its earliest monument the Proverbs of Solomon, was simply a miscellany of detached observations, lessons condensing a treatise into a maxim, and not depending on neighbor maxims either for support or validity. In ranging itself with the books of Hebrew Wisdom, this book makes no professions of departing from the type. If it turns out to be more continuous and systematic than a miscellany, we are to discover the fact by internal evidence.

The general type of structure for the books of Wisdom.

Proverbs x.-xxix.

But while, as the Wisdom literature developed, nothing more systematic was avowed, the structural type did not stand still. The discovery of untoward tendencies and of exceptions to the large law of Wisdom, as already mentioned, was itself an influence to concentrate thought from the *obiter dicta* form

Tendency to become more systematic and continuous.

to a form more mutually supporting and motived. The claim of continuity, in some application, was making itself felt. Even in the later portions of the Book of Proverbs there was a tendency to lengthen the *mashal*, or maxim-lesson, from a sententious couplet to a little essay or parable, in which some notes of the course as well as of the conclusion of the thought were given. In the Book of Job a much more complex structure was adopted, in which the *mashal* was connected by an underlying thread of controversy, and still more deeply by a thread of narrative; the whole thus tracing a history of spiritual struggle and progress.

The Book of Koheleth built on the inductive principle.

Here in this Book of Koheleth we come upon an interesting forward step in structure. The principle, the connecting thread, is inductive. The writer is concerned first of all with getting at facts, the hard uncolored facts of existence, and with letting these facts lead where they will, without attempt to prejudge or palliate them. It is time enough to draw inferences or deduce lessons when the facts are all in. The verdict is not obvious from the start, as in a homily, but comes gradually into sight and reason. And so while these facts of existence are being gathered and marshaled, there may be a stage in the argument wherein assertions are left as it were in abeyance,

not a conclusion, but a premise or datum awaiting its solution; truth indeed, but not the whole truth, nor the key-truth. Of such nature, it seems to me, are all those cardinal utterances which have proved most startling: the asseverations of vanity, of the lack of profit, of the return of things on themselves, of the leveling power of death, of the lack of outlook beyond. All these are facts viewed phenomenally, just as they look, before any practical or dogmatic inference is drawn from them; not things to be proved, but things to be conceded on the way to things more momentous; above all, things to be faced courageously and dared to their worst. They are data of a kind of induction; and before them all is the unspoken question what the soul is to do about it.

A manner of procedure this, very familiar to our modern times, being in fact the rigorous requisite of the scientific spirit; but so foreign to the natural working of the Hebrew mind that this pioneer attempt, as we may call it, has caused great bewilderment among interpreters. The very genius of the *mashal* or maxim literature seemed to require that a truth should not be reasoned out but asserted, and that too in the crystallized apothegm form which connoted long attrition and shaping until every particle of the finished truth was in

Strangeness of this inductive thread to the genius of the mashal.

its fated place. The component dicta of a body of truth were like bits of a broken magnet, each a complete magnet with its positive and negative poles. We can realize, therefore, how estranging it would be at first, and how much like bewilderment or inconsistency, if the bearing of a statement were left uncertain until something else were put with it, — something to tell what the vanity here or the dimness beyond amounts to, and how to adjust life to it. Herein lies in great part, I think, the explanation of the discordancy of view which has so divided interpreters, driving some to their distraction theories and others to the puttering postulates of composite authorship. We have before us simply the parts or involvements of a thought not yet fitted together, the data of an induction.

How it identifies itself with the scientific temper.

Of this inductive thread running through the book we are of course not to require all our modern apparatus of hypothesis, accumulation of data, cautionary test, patient verification. The attempt is too early for that, too early to be other than crude. What is mainly to be noted is its touch of the real scientific temper, its disposition to concede to its observations, strange and undesired though they be, the tribute of ascertained facts. And this puts Koheleth in the company of those scien-

tific minds of our age of which I have already spoken, and in that spirit which is distinguished "by openness of vision, by the determination to exhibit reality, and to hope for just so much as may be expected, by the bold use of such hypotheses as can be brought to book, and by the steady temper that" will not be unmanned by mystery.[1] The outcome, too, is as nearly our modern one as the more meagre data of his age would permit. He too, when his whole testimony is in and his verdict made up, belongs to "the literature of hope, of faith in the known life of man, and of a hard-won optimism."

See pages 11 sqq. above.

IV

To show this, in the face of long intrenched estimates of Koheleth, is, I am aware, the burden of proof which the present Study, committed

[1] In the following description we can trace, as more fully developed, much of the same spirit that the foregoing pages have discerned in Koheleth: "The scientific spirit signifies poise between hypothesis and verification, between statement and proof, between appearance and reality. It is inspired by the impulse of investigation tempered with distrust and edged with curiosity. It is at once avid of certainty and sceptical of seeming. Mirage does not fascinate, nor blankness dispirit it. It is enthusiastically patient, nobly literal, candid, tolerant, hospitable. It has no major proposition to advocate or defend, no motive beyond that of attestation. It shrinks from temerity in assertion at the same time that it is animated with the ardor of divination." — Brownell, *Victorian Prose Masters*, page 67.

as it is, must with whatever seeming effrontery take upon itself. It must run the risks inherent in following out a radically new interpretation.

Analysis of the course of thought.

One thing of course must be conceded. We are studying an ancient book, wherein the literary work-tools which have become so keen and deft in our hands are more rudely and crudely handled; nor indeed is the course of Koheleth's thought so simple and transparent as to yield *ad aperturam* that sense of organism, unitary, sequential, interrelated, which we have come to demand of a modern literary work. Most critics maintain that no coherent plan underlies it. The older miscellany idea, they aver, proves too strong. Koheleth starts indeed with a promising statement of the situation; goes on awhile with a fairly consistent story of his royal experiments in life; ends eventually (or some glossator for him) with a "conclusion of the whole matter," as if there were really some ordered matter to conclude; but somehow in the space between he seems to have lost his thread, and through large tracts of his book just to have dumped down the random contents of his portfolio, merely putting in enough cement of his own personality to give them a turbid and doubting tinge. It is some such initial impression as this that we have to meet and work upon.

The initial impression of the book.

Here, however, we must reckon with a new element of the case, namely, the element of purpose and dominant emphasis. What is the motive, the unit of insight, that is centrally operative in the book? From what station of knowledge and sympathy, of conviction and reaction, is Koheleth laying out a map of life? On the answer to this question, which has been the main subject of the foregoing chapters, we need not here dwell; though it is a plain truth that the whole question of the book's plan turns upon it.

The unit of insight and emphasis.

From the point of view currently taken, that it is the mere record of an embittered and disillusioned soul, the book is indeed a chaos; we cannot read it otherwise. But this may be the fault of the point of view. A station not at the just angle, or not high enough up to command the whole landscape, may merely bring into the field of vision one class of phenomena and leave the others invisible or lying unrelated. This is rather strikingly illustrated by the scheme of division which Professor Moulton has prefixed to his edition of the book; wherein between the "essays" into which the body of thought supposedly falls are sandwiched virtual confessions of bafflement headed "Miscellanea." This may be the best that

How the current judgment of the book makes the plan chaotic.

In the Modern Reader's Bible.

the case admits; but in the mind that craves coherence it raises the query how the thought, in moving through such a course, came to scatter so many irrelevant chips and splinters; which query indeed passes into the doubt whether, after all, the lines of logical cleavage, self-consistent and self-justifying, have really been discovered, or even can be from such approach. Much the same doubt must needs rise, however ungraciously, from most of the prevailing analyses of the book. They have about them, in spite of their ingenuity or perhaps because of it, the note of the arbitrary; as if they were a manufactured thing forced on the thought, or as if the dubious best had been made of some distraction theory wherein Koheleth's verdict was regarded as out of tune with itself and perpetually losing the keynote. It is clear, to my mind, that the fault with all these expositors lies in the point of view, the unit of insight, which, incorrectly taken, compels them to read the book as a body of thought largely heterogeneous and uncoördinated. They have chosen a position from which they cannot see the wood for the trees.

After this wholesale onslaught, nothing remains for me, of course, but to show what comes from assuming that Koheleth, though acknowledging fully the evil of things, is yet working steadily upward from chaos to cosmos, from the negative

subjection of all under vanity to the positive emergence of the self-governed soul and the intrinsic man. This assumption, to begin with, is not taken arbitrarily. It comes from a careful balancing of all the elements of the case. And it agrees best with the book's portrayal of Koheleth himself; who appears as a kingly, kindly counselor, aiming to raise his people to a table-land of strength and wisdom, rather than as a bewildered Q[1] requiring a body-guard of emendators to keep his thought from tumbling everything into ruins. Nor is it without plain points of definition and support appearing throughout the course of the thought. Let us begin with these.

The newer point of view as a controlling element.

As we go carefully through the book, searching for its salient and character-giving features, we come upon a number of passages that reiterate substantially the same counsel, — namely, rejoice in your work, for work is your portion here, and you know not what shall be elsewhere or hereafter, and the capacity to rejoice is the gift of God. These passages, which read as if they were meant to be landing-stages of inference or counsel, are varied in expression as they succeed each other, in two principal ways: first, as they bring out to greater relative prominence some aspect of the advice fitted to the range

Landmarks of structure in the book.

of thought immediately preceding; and secondly, as they grow in each repetition in volume and fervor of conviction. They form thus, as compared with each other, a kind of cumulative series. The question very naturally rises, May not these passages, in the author's mind, stand in close relation to the progressive movement of his inquiry? In other words, were they not to him what the culmination of a chapter, or the enforcement of an argument, would be to us?

Acting on this suggestion as a clue, and studying the portions of the book thus bounded, we find the work revealing a fairly plain cleavage of thought. The proem at the beginning and the epilogue at the end are already obvious; and between these, according to my estimate, the work falls into a division of seven sections, to which, adopting Koheleth's own characterization of his investigations, I have given the name Surveys. Of these Surveys the first two and the last are rather more finished and interrelated than the rest, presenting the type more rounded out; whether because the subjects of the others did not admit so close ordering, or because the author was unable to give the finishing touches to the others, it is not easy to say. There is, however, when we get the subjects well digested, a traceable similarity

The division which these suggest.

In Survey i. 3.

of procedure throughout the successive Surveys. Each begins with a group of facts or observations designed apparently to state in candid and unequivocal terms some puzzle or problem of life. Following this are several stages of related detail or subsidiary counsel; the whole rounded off with a kind of solution stage, generally giving with appropriate amplification the counsel about work and joy which I have already mentioned, and thereby clinching the subject under contemplation. Thus all the Surveys, according to their subject-matter, proceed more or less distinctly by way of induction and application, making clear first the fact, then the soul's recourse in view of the fact. As a whole, too, the body of the thought exhibits somewhat the same large movement. In the first Survey the induction of facts predominates; it is thus of more preliminary nature, less suggestive of a solution, than the rest. As the book advances, however, the solvent, the positive and constructive tissue, comes more clearly into cogency and volume, as it were by successive surges; until by the time we reach the seventh Survey, as the inductive data have been disposed of in detail, the thought has become almost purely applicative, and the unquiet abeyance of unsolved problems has disappeared.

Such, in rude outline, is what I conceive to be

the structural principle of the book. To be exhibited clearly, it needs more extended comparing of part with part than can well be made here; from the Outline on page 209, below, and the Commentary, the reader can see how it proves itself in detail. It may be advisable here, though, before leaving this part of our study, to run rapidly over the successive Surveys, with reference to their central thread, and their claim to unitary and coherent structure.

The central thread of each division.

The Proem (chapter i. 2–11), which I entitle The Fact, and the Question, makes absolute concession of vanity everywhere: vanity in nature, revealed by the return of things on themselves; vanity in the human soul, which is never satisfied and can find nothing new; vanity in the ongoings of history, wherein everything passes and is forgotten. Confronting all this is the question, "What profit hath man in all his labor?" which question is left for the course of the book to give such answer as it can.

The Proem.

The First Survey (chapter i. 12–ii. 26), which I entitle An Induction of Life, enters the world of affairs at its best, by recounting, in the assumed personality of Solomon, Koheleth's quest among the worldly values of life, and his encounter with the bewildering fact of

The First Survey.

death; from all which returning unsatisfied, he leaves the solution with God, whose compensating gift to man, uninvaded by vanity, is wisdom and knowledge and joy.

The Second Survey (chapter iii.), which I entitle Times and Seasons, enters the world of events. It contemplates man in a current of activities wherein time brings fitting occasions for the most contrasted things; recognizes in the world's heart a strain of eternity which, however, manifests itself not in vaticination but in hidden vitality; and as a solution bids man rejoice in his ordained work as his response unenthralled by time. The Second Survey.

The Third Survey (chapters iv., v.), which I entitle In a Crooked World, faces the evils rising from ascendency of power, despotic government, organized injustice, hardness of heart, which in any view of the world must stand as a discount from the ideal; recounts as mitigation, in various walks and duties, certain better alternatives dictated by good sense; and as solution bids man rejoice in labor and its fruits, as a good irreproachable, and as God's gift to sweeten the life so exposed to evils. The Third Survey.

The Fourth Survey (chapter vi. 1–vii. 18), which I entitle Fate, and the Intrinsic Man, faces the mystery within, and especially that strange

inability of man to attain a goal of satisfaction; sets before him, in maxim form, certain better alternatives available for greater wealth and worth of soul; and as solution proposes a balance and sanity of mind, *in utrumque paratus*, in the fear of God.

The Fourth Survey.

The Fifth Survey (chapter vii. 19–ix. 10), which I entitle Avails of Wisdom, begins to mark a little more determinately the transition from the puzzles of life to its prevailing compensations. Allowing first for the discount that must be made from man's asset of wisdom on account of his froward devisings, it then sets wisdom, in turn, over against the emergencies of life, as tact, over against the veiling of judgment, and over against the baffling hereafter; proposing, as a comprehensive solution, a full-ordered life of joyful work and confidence, as thus best using the existence of which we are sure.

The Fifth Survey.

The Sixth Survey (chapter ix. 11–xi. 6), which I entitle Wisdom Encountering Time and Chance, begins with a brief induction of the thwarting element of time and chance, then goes on to show, as a foil to this, wisdom as a hidden power under the surface of things. Its latter part, reverting to the more miscellaneous character of the older proverb books, contains aphorisms, both prose and poetic, on wisdom's

The Sixth Survey.

works and words, and on practical prudence in affairs.

The Seventh Survey (chapter xi. 7–xii. 7), which I entitle Rejoice, and Remember, may be regarded as at once the solution stage of the previous Survey and more truly the summarizing section of the whole body of counsel. It inculcates joy and good heed for every period of life, joy and the forward look for young manhood, and mindfulness of the Creator before the evil days come.

The Seventh Survey.

For the Epilogue (chapter xii. 8–14), I have chosen the title The Nail Fastened. It repeats the initial concession of vanity, as still holding good, but in the presence of it leaves man at the summit of his manhood, in reverence and obedience awaiting the dawn of judgment.

The Epilogue.

If the foregoing analysis has been justly made, with the vital lines of its thought fairly related and proportioned, I think we may say the Book of Koheleth does not greatly fall behind the more self-conscious workmanship of our modern literature. Of course its ways are not all our ways, and for the cold, cautious work of induction it has twenty centuries' handicap; it is, as it were, compend notes, leaving by our standard gaps and holes; but the

Summary as regards the workmanship of the book.

germs are there, and the ordering constructive spirit. When we keep steadily in mind the goal to which Koheleth is aiming, and the single-minded mood of counsel that bears him on, we can pardon many of those minor things which seem at first sight to clog or obscure a pioneer effort. They are merely pebbles in the current.

V

Explanation and location of residuary difficulties.

That there are such, that in spite of this reversed unit of insight and motive the tissue of the book still retains much of crabbed obscurity, it would be fatuous to deny. The Book of Koheleth still remains one of the puzzling works of Hebrew literature, perhaps the supreme example; though I think the difficulty is greatly reduced, and that a careful genetic inquiry will reveal at what different point the source of it is to be located. Let us see how this is.

Difficulties native to the language.

One of these sources lies in the Hebrew language itself; which for the shadings, the precisions, the flexibilities of philosophic discrimination, is a rather unwieldy medium. Meant evidently for the more primitive and rough-hewn work of literary expression, — plain narrative or emotional appeal, — developed poetically to the aphoristic rather than to a flowing and

continuous texture; when a finely drawn logical distinction has to be made, or an interlinked and graduated course of reasoning, it betrays a certain crude baldness which leaves much for the reader to fill in by translating, as it were, into his own more matured tongue. After the analogy of its written characters it gives, so to say, the consonantal landmarks, to which from his rapport with the inner sense the reader must add the articulating vowels.

In two principal ways we have, in the study of Koheleth's thought, to reckon with this peculiar limitation of the Hebrew language. For one thing, it is somewhat put to it for vocabulary; a difficulty the more grave because in his time Koheleth is using a language already to some degree archaic and decadent. Old words whose original sense was baldly concrete have to be pressed into an abstract significance, or new terms and shadings have to be coined out of homely metaphors. There are numerous traces of this peculiar kind of clumsiness: one in the name Koheleth itself, which has called forth reams of discussion; another in the term *yithrōn*, profit or surplusage, for the full scope of which, as is shown above, we have to hold in solution Koheleth's whole body of thought. Further examples could easily be

How these difficulties have to be reckoned with.

See pages 20, 34.

multiplied; as striking an instance as any, perhaps, may be seen in the attempt in the Epilogue to describe the kind of literary tissue that Koheleth is trying here to employ, the principle of thematic and coördinated argument, as distinguished from the *mashal*, or maxim. — A second thing, which exacts from the interpreter a vigilance both penetrating and comprehensive, is the poverty of the Hebrew language in the matter of connectives, those necessary instruments of fineness and flexibility. One conjunction — the omnipresent *and* of plain recounting — has to do duty for a variety of relations and shadings; and what the value of the connected clause is, whether additive or antithetic, inferential or subordinate, can be accurately determined only from the inside, only by knowing from the spirit of the book and the man which way the current of thought is flowing. I cannot better illustrate this, perhaps, than by putting in parallel columns a passage of Dr. Cox's version, in which he conforms the words of connection to the theory that the current in that place is negative, and the same passage in my own, in which I regard the current as positive; from which parallel it can also be seen in what radical sense translation must needs be interpretation.

Epilogue 10-12; see note.

Dr. Cox's Version.	Version of this Book.
Therefore say I, though wisdom is better than strength, yet the wisdom of the poor is despised, and his words are not listened to: though the quiet words of the wise have much advantage over the vociferations of a fool of fools, and wisdom is better than weapons of war, yet one fool destroyeth much good.	And I said, Better is wisdom than might, though the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not regarded. Words of the wise, heard in quiet, are better than the clamor of him that ruleth among fools. Better is wisdom than weapons of war, though one sinner destroyeth much good.[1]

If this comparison raises the disturbing query whether the Hebrew text is thus so much of a wax nose, to be pulled this way or that as the critic wills, the only available answer is, that the critic's one resource is, in self-effacing submission, to ascertain what is the will, what the spirit, of the author, and let this control his emphases, his vanishing-points, his unspoken links of relation and connection. There is nothing for it but this. His translator must be his interpreter, and the interpretation must be identification of his halting germinal thoughts, according to the spirit of them, with our more developed philosophies. The question of a conjunction, therefore, or of a delicate adjustment of stress, is no

The translator as interpreter.

[1] Survey vi. 25–34 (chapter ix. 16, 17). For convenience of comparison I discard the parallelisms in which Dr. Cox has arranged his translation.

idle matter; it may be far-reaching, sending us back for its accurate solution to the central conviction of all. That is why I have so insisted on finding the all-commanding point of view; that is why, in my endeavor to make sure of this, I have begun so far back and laid the spiritual foundations so deep. If the tissue is homogeneous, the power and thrust of every counsel, every judgment of life, is determined more or less directly by all the rest. And to keep track of this mutual relation, to find the current and key of every part, is to let Koheleth speak his mind.

Another source of difficulty to be reckoned with is the fact that Koheleth is essaying a literary procedure which is consciously an innovation, a transition from the old and familiar to the new and untried. This may be described in large terms as the transition from what the French call *style coupé* to *style soutenu*, or as we have already noted, from the *mashal* to the connected body of thought. The Epilogue says of his literary method that he had three ways of handling subject-matter: composing, compiling, and arranging. Of these three, as newest and most to his large purpose, he evidently set special store by the third; it, with its connotation of mutual support, was the means of

Difficulties due to transition from *style coupé* to *style soutenu*.

See above, pages 176-179.

Epilogue, 5.

converting a statement from a momentarily pricking goad to a nail well driven and clinched. He threw himself, it would seem, with much zest, into the employment of this new working-tool. It is hardly to be expected, however, that he should cut himself loose from the old *mashal* form at once, especially as with the rest he had store of compiled matter to dispose of; nor that he should at the first trial achieve perfect workmanship in managing a body of continuous thought. Some marks of the prentice hand, or of imperfect joinery, would still be visible.

Epilogue, 10-13.

This presumption may be taken, I think, as a fair explanation of some of Koheleth's peculiarities. It throws light, for one thing, on his frequent employment of proverbial sayings to point or clinch his argument. Some of these fit as close as if they were composed for the place, as we are ready to think they were; others, coming doubtless from a compilation, bear the marks of being brought in, sometimes veritably lugged in, from outside, and these do not always escape the charge of deflecting or obscuring the thought. An unusually flagrant case occurs at Survey iii. 18, where see note. The Sixth Survey, which is made up predominantly of aphorisms prose and poetic, is, while not really out of the

Some illustrations of this.

See Survey i. 10, and note there.

Survey iii. 18.

general current, largely supplementary in character, reading much as if it had been appended to the plan as a receptacle for an accumulation of material for which proper connection has not been apparent elsewhere. If this is so, it is quite in line with Koheleth's avowed workmanship, and serves rather to accentuate than to impair his controlling sense of plan. — For another thing, this transition hypothesis explains a certain lack of artistic skill in the massing of amplification natural to a beginner and not unknown to the present day. The amplification, especially if it includes a maxim, is sometimes appended not to the main trend of the passage, but to a subordinate or antithetic member, producing a superficial appearance of departure from the line of thought. A notable example of this occurs at Survey v. 53 ; another at vi. 31 ; both of which are explained in detail by the notes there. Such phenomena as these, which are a commonplace to one accustomed to judge literature genetically, go far to remove the warrant for attributing to Koheleth a chaos of plan, as so many critics do. They are the plainly recognizable slips of one whose art, though ably meant, is not fully developed. Koheleth is a pioneer in this kind of literary craftsmanship, as he is in his scientific temper and attack.

Survey vi.

Survey v. 53 ; vi. 31.

VI

Some remarks about the style.

Of the style of the Book of Koheleth, the way this sombre and sturdy thought got itself into word and image, period and trenchant line, not very much remains to be said. Here, as in the sequence of thought and plan, it will be found that the spirit, though struggling with a language grown somewhat decadent and decrepit, has shaped itself, on the whole, an adequate body of expression. There is an unusually large proportion of knotty forms and constructions; not, however, to any exceptional degree, of the kind that yields to the spleeny clap-trap of mutilated text, or stupid glosses, or misplaced leaves of manuscript. With proper allowance made for Koheleth's age and worn medium, there does not seem to be enough motive left to go to any wholesale extent into the swamps of this unsavory kind of criticism. It may make individual critics confident of their fantastic conjectures — until the next tinkerer kicks it all over; but it does not go far in making the book a clearer or solider or more symmetrical thing to the reader for whom it was meant. Our best guide, after all, is the sanity which comprehends Koheleth the man, and which begins the study not with the dead thing that had been centuries done, but, so far as possible,

with the living word as it came warm from the shaping soul.

The Book of Koheleth is essentially a prose utterance, having the prose temper and the prose work to do. It contains little, if any, of that lyric intensity which riots in imagery or impassioned eloquence. Rather the matter-of-fact mood is in control; its imagery frankly illustrative, its eloquence subdued to practical reasoning or counsel. The epigrammatic couplet of the older Wisdom literature is, as has been explained, no longer operative as the unit of style. That constant parallelism and return to which this form would commit the writer has been pretty well broken up in the interests of continuity; the occasional *mashal* couplet being employed, much as we use poetical quotation, to introduce clinching or illustrative maxims for the most part compiled. Apart from this the tissue is mainly that of a nervous, didactic prose. In the Proem, to be sure, and here and there throughout, the emotion rises to a grave height which might not unfitly be exhibited in a quasi parallelism; but it is so little over the border of a prose which has become fully naturalized among us, if indeed it goes beyond it at all, that a prose form better represents it, suggesting more lucidly as this does the *style soutenu* in

Koheleth essentially a prose book.

Cf. page 177, above.

which it is Koheleth's well-meant endeavor to work.

Sometimes a vividly realizing imagination produces, without *mashal* aid, a kind of word-picture; as in

The more imaginative parts.

"The sun riseth also, and the sun goeth down,
And *cometh panting back* to his place where he riseth;" Proem, 8-10.

and sometimes the very quaintness of the antique Hebrew, with its keen sense for word forms, is charmingly poetic; as in

"Going to the south, and circling to the north, —
Circling, circling, goeth the wind,
And upon his circuits returneth the wind;"[1] Proem, 10-14.

where the elaborate play on the words *circling* and *circuits*, and the repetition of the inverted sentence order, are relied upon for the imaginative support. For such descriptive touches as these, which are not rare, we do well to keep our eyes open; we shall find them motived, in each case, by the spirit of the passage. These particular examples occur, it will be observed, in the Proem, where in a kind of austere eloquence Koheleth is putting his kindled cosmic imagination into utterance. A similar rugged intensity occurs whenever he faces the large elemental things, as for instance

[1] I have put these passages into parallelistic form here, to show more clearly their poetic affinity.

when he realizes what abysmal depths of wisdom pervade the sum of being: —

Survey v. 12-15.

> "All this have I tried by wisdom;
> I said, Oh, let me be wise!
> — And it was far from me.
> Far off, that which is,
> And deep, deep, — who shall find it?"

To these examples may not unfitly be added, though in more buoyant and flowing vein, that kind of impetuous reveling in the details of man's compensating lot which occurs at the solution stages of the Surveys; note this especially at the close of Surveys iii. and v., where the exultant sense of conviction and wealthy resource produces a degree of poetry.

Survey iii. 117-129; v. 140-155.

In all this we have not yet taken into account the notable enlargement, in sweep and freedom, which comes over the thought in the Sixth and Seventh Surveys, as Koheleth approaches the summit, the final triumph, so to say, of his body of counsel. I have classed the book as essentially a prose utterance. So it is, as long as Koheleth is dealing, like a strong wrestler, with the enigmas of existence and the ills of his time. As soon, however, as he has encountered the last thwarting element of time and chance, the gradual emancipation of the more buoyant spirit reads like a pro-

The culminating stage of the book.

Beginning of Survey vi.

gressive change from weights to wings. Beginning with the charming little parable of the poor wise man, it goes on first with a section of homely workday maxims, as if consciously launching into the long-repressed current of venerable wisdom for which it has so profoundly cleared the way; but for a while the utterance of this wisdom is practical, prudential, wisdom of the Poor Richard type. The difference is very marked, however, when suddenly we come upon the peculiar thought-rhyme of the Hebrew poetry, and are at once aware of standing on a higher emotional level: —

Survey vi. 16-34.

Survey vi. 35-76.

Survey vi. 77 sqq.

> "Woe to thee, O land, whose king is a boy!
> And whose princes feast in the morning!
> Blessed thou, O land, whose king is a son of nobles,
> And whose princes feast at the fitting time,
> In manly strength, and not in revelry."

From this point onward, until we come to the more narrative spirit of the Epilogue, the text, never reaching again the pedestrian tone of prose, keeps to the more elevated level of the later poetic *mashal*, gradually extending its range and beauty; until, in the culminating descriptions of young manhood and old age, which passages ought not to be dissociated, even the most liberally interpreted *mashal* fails to compass the

Survey vii. 8-42.

vision, and the expression flows into a luxuriance of Oriental imagery and detail. Better than anything else except the opening exclamation, the Book of Koheleth is known, to ordinary readers, by the elaborately colored chapter on the decline of the vital powers; it is the acknowledged high-water mark of poetic utterance. One is reminded of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, wherein, the utmost resources of orchestra proving inadequate to his mighty musical conception, he must needs supplement wood and strings and brass by a chorus of living human voices. It is no longer a Hebrew Wisdom couplet that we hear, but a majestic tide of world poetry. And when we consider what and how it culminates, we cannot call this access of larger diction and rhythm adventitious. It is like the melting of struggling discords into a grave and solemn yet restful harmony. A native prose utterance, dictated by the scientific temper and spirit, has risen on wings of a vitalizing imagination into the finest spirit of poetry.

The limits of Koheleth's imagination.

Let me not be read as if I were setting up the claim of having discovered a flawless work of literary art. The book is still weighted with its turbid time-spirit, its unhandy idiom, its pioneer task. Not even in its own distinctive class can it be regarded as filling out its type. Koheleth's theme is large, the largest,

but we miss in him the majestic sweep of a Job or an Isaiah. The night of legalism rests, as upon his message, so upon his utterance. In this matter of upsoaring imagination, for instance, his limitations are as evident as his range. We see this especially when he confronts the mystery of world and time in primal recognition of which his book was written. It is, we may say, just the quality of imagination, of insight scientific and creative, which can take the next and most immediately useful step, but has not yet burst bounds and come out into the unhorizoned free. We feel this, for one thing, in the way he holds his vision sternly self-limited, to the verge of the perverse, in his reaction against "dreams and vanities and words many." His face so rigidly set against all foregleams of futurity, we dimly feel, is not just what an ardently constructive insight, ideally free from prejudice, would take; for the sake of the more corrective truth, his imagination has put a bridle on itself. We feel too, sometimes, how in the very fulfillment of its huge world-task his descriptive power sweats under its load; as if, instead of painting the picture, he could only bring the subject to the reader and bid him paint his own: — "I saw all the living that walk under the sun on the side of this youth, . . . no end to all the people, to all over

Survey iii. 49.

whom he was." Several instances of such kind of abortive description, where a modern pen would riot in its opportunity, will strike the attentive reader: the toil and the beauty, Survey ii. 23; oppressions and tears, iii. 1; the tyrant's funeral procession, v. 66; the world spread out, v. 114. Or else, when a great stormy truth looms before him out of the universe, the skill of selection fails him, and he pours out a kind of untempered Whitmanesque catalogue. We can see something of what is here meant in the passage where, in the intense realization of the chaotic welter of the world, he reaches the nadir-point of his agnosticism. As compared with the deft modern touch, his rude imagination, struggling toward vigorous portrayal, reminds one of Milton's lion, "pawing to get free his hinder parts." All this, of course, is not other than we have the warrant to expect; it is the stage of descriptive art that belongs to his literary level.

Survey v. 110-127.

If, however, his untutored imagination works only in the absoluteness of primary colors, or is at times well-nigh swamped in the chaos and wreckage of the world, another characteristic we have at hand to offset it, — his eminently sane power of recovery. No abyss is too deep for him to escape to firm ground. His counsel, schooled to mastery in a more native He-

His power of recovery.

brew genius, makes up by a kind of healthy good sense for what his literary touch lacks in descriptive skill. Instances of this abound, it being the distinguishing tone and virility of his book. A good example of it follows the nadir-point just mentioned. By a few lines of transition Koheleth strides from that seeming abysmal gloom, wherein "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that — to the dead," upward to the eminence which, of all his words, marks his highest and noblest. Nor is this latter attainment less solid and permanent for leaving us, if not at the most poetic, yet at the most serviceable attitude toward life. For this, directing the soul to a tableland of wisdom for his age and all ages, is his unique distinction.

Four chapters ago we set out to study the literary and spiritual values of this puzzling Book of Koheleth. And now at the end of our journey it remains only to say, we have not studied two things but one. The literary has its roots in the spiritual; *is* the spiritual moulded into words. We commune with Koheleth's wholesome spirit, and the words become lucid, the puzzles disappear. As the spirit of a weary creation, burdened by law and made

The literary and spiritual values: one, in reach and range.

subject to vanity, breathed upon him, so he spoke, making the vast cosmic sigh his own. As the dreamy spirit of a time roused him to sharp reaction and corrective counsel, so he spoke, endeavoring to recall his nation back to the seasoned wisdom of many Hebrew generations. As the faint flush of a new spiritual morning, heralded first by an inner sense of need, began to kindle far behind the untraveled hills, so he spoke, girding his waiting spirit, in the fear of God and the integrity of manhood, to readiness for the approaching test of hearts. And the words he spoke, as the spirit of them is unbound, do not fail or lose their edge, but grow more vital with the latest years. For they ignore the deadness of convention, the bars of caste, the clamors of sect, the refinements of speculation, and speak for man as man.

II

WORDS OF KOHELETH

TRANSLATION AND RUNNING COMMENTARY

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned
him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
I report, as a man may of God's work."

BROWNING: *Saul.*

"O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is —
Perchance, because we see not to the close."

TENNYSON: *The Passing of Arthur.*

THE OUTLINE

Proem. The Fact, and the Question. — Vanity being the sequel of all that we see, what profit therefore to man? — The concession due to vanity; in the return of things on themselves; in human unsatisfaction; in the self-repeating cycles of time. (Chapter i. 2–11.)

The First Survey. An Induction of Life. — Koheleth's experiments in life, and the sum-total of their result. Wisdom, the outfit for the quest, subject, like all else, to vanity. — I. The quest itself: carried out in pleasure, art, luxury, wealth. Result of the experiment: its success; its failure; and the residue it yielded. — II. The final event, with its bewildering invasion of man's work and plans. — III. The solution with God; whose approving response is revealed in wisdom and knowledge and joy. (Chapter i. 12–ii. 26.)

The Second Survey. Times and Seasons. — The thesis of the Survey. — I. How the most contrary things have their season, wherein they are timely. — II. Man's work also has its time; but in it is a strain of eternity, to give it depth and character. — III. A time likewise for judgment, which in the present is veiled for educative ends. — IV. The solution: to rejoice in one's own works, as fitting to the seen present, not the problematic future. (Chapter iii.)

The Third Survey. In a Crooked World. — I. Particu-

lars of the Survey: 1. Cruelties of the upper hand toward inferiors; 2. Rivalries between equals, impairing, as also does indolent folly, the ideal of restful activity; 3. The ultimate logic of such exclusive self-regard. — II. Better alternatives dictated by good sense, as mitigation of various evils: 1. What is better in the every-day relations of men; 2. What is better in the leadership of state; 3. What is better in the house of God; 4. What is better in the plighted word of man. — III. Offsets to the findings of the Survey: 1. In the machinery of the state; 2. In the cares of wealth; 3. In the channels of gain. — IV. The solution: the good and comely life of joy in work and in the portion which God hath given. (Chapters iv., v.)

The Fourth Survey. Fate, and the Intrinsic Man. — Concrete case occasioning the Survey: Possessions, and no power to use them. — I. Evil of missing the good of life. The hunger for what is more than meat. The measure that fate has taken. — II. Better alternatives that make for soul-building. — III. The solution: Balanced sanity of mind, *in utrumque paratus*. (Chapter vi. 1–vii. 18.)

The Fifth Survey. Avails of Wisdom. — The thesis of the Survey. — I. The untoward side: Wisdom is not in casual words; is far to seek; and debasable. — II. The positive avails: Wisdom before the powers of judgment. Counsel to bow to the powers that be, even though arbitrary; waiting for the time when judgment shall appear; and when the balance shall be made even. It is wisdom not to presume on delay of judgment; but to hold to the sure law of good; and to

possess the soul in that good cheer which sweetens toil. — III. Wisdom before the enigmas of destiny. Presume not on the sameness of destiny as warrant for unwisdom; but make up life with reference rather to life than to the impending death. — IV. The solution: Life fully furnished and faithful to a divinely accepted work. (Chapter vii. 19–ix. 10.)

The Sixth Survey. Wisdom Encountering Time and Chance. — Discount for the thwarting element of time and chance. — I. Wisdom as an unvalued power working under the surface of things. — II. Prose aphorisms of wisdom's words and works. — III. Poetic aphorisms of wisdom as sanity and prudence in affairs. — IV. The solution: Work, like the husbandman's, in that faith which takes all chances. (Chapter ix. 11–xi. 6.)

The Seventh Survey. Rejoice, and Remember. — The whole counsel proposed. — I. Joy and the forward look for young manhood. — II. Memory to temper joy, while yet the days are fair. (Chapter xi. 7–xii. 7.)

Epilogue. The Nail Fastened. — The concession of vanity holds as ever. Koheleth's ideal of instruction and authorship. The end of the matter: the soul's station at the centre of manhood, ready for judgment. (Chapter xii. 8–14.)

THE STRUCTURAL IDEA

FROM its initial note of vanity to its final leave-taking of earth, the whole Book of Koheleth is conceived in one supreme idea, one homogeneous conviction. What this is let these few words endeavor to summarize: —

LIFE IS AN ULTIMATE FACT. IT HAS NO EQUIVALENT; IT WILL ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTE. IN WHATEVER ALLOTMENT OF WORK AND WAGE, IN WHATEVER EXPERIENCE OF EASE OR HARDSHIP, IN WHATEVER SEEN OR UNSEEN RANGE OF BEING; LIFE, UTTERLY REFUSING TO BE MEASURED BY ANYTHING ELSE, MUST BE ITS OWN REWARD AND BLESSEDNESS, OR NOTHING.

WORDS OF KOHELETH

SON OF DAVID, KING IN JERUSALEM

PROEM

THE FACT, AND THE QUESTION

Vanity being the sequel of all that we see, what profit therefore to man?

VANITY of vanities, saith Koheleth, vanity of vanities, — all vanity. What profit hath man, in all his labor, which he laboreth under the sun?

Chap. i. 2, 3.

For verse 1, here printed as the heading of the whole book, and for the names and titles it contains, see the Introductory Study, pp. 169–174.

This Proem, beginning with a sweeping statement, or rather exclamation, of the cosmic fact, vanity, appends the question, "What profit to man?" — a question which at first thought seems, by the very universality of the fact, to be closed to any but a negative answer; but when repeated, in Survey ii. l. 21, contains a much more hopeful implication; see Introductory Study, p. 74. The remainder of the Proem, ll. 6–31, illustrates, in a series of broad specifications drawn from nature and the world of man, in what sense all is subject to vanity; this, not so much to prove the fact as to give its significance and range. Vanity is fully

The concession due to vanity:

GENERATION goeth, and generation
cometh, while for ever the earth

CHAP. I. 4.

and freely conceded, however hopeless the concession leaves the world ; no skeptic or pessimist can go beyond Koheleth in this honesty to what, from his point of view, is to be observed.

LINE 1. The word translated *vanity* means breath, vapor. It is the same word that, as a proper name, was given to Abel, the first man who died ; Genesis iv. 2. The word is reduplicated, in Hebrew idiom, for absoluteness of emphasis; as if the author had said, "Breath, — nothing but breath." It is Koheleth's pronouncement on the "gross and scope" of life, more particularly life as revealed in environment and as responding thereto. Life "under the sun," that is, the phenomenal, material, earthly life, is what he is thinking of ; and so far as any visible data for judgment go, it seems to amount merely to the breath used up in the living of it. How universally this applies is left for the various specifications that follow, as successive aspects of life come into view.

3. *What profit hath man?* This question, as a kind of obverse, follows naturally on the exclamation of vanity, — as much as to say, Since all is vanity, what profit? the first implication being negative and challenging, — no profit at all. See Introductory Study, p. 68. This sense of the question is just commensurate with the sense in which vanity is asserted, applying to the same earthly sphere. If we could get a glimpse of a higher sphere, beyond or within, the question might not seem so absolutely to negative profit ; and this is in fact what comes to light in Survey ii. 21, where the question reads as if an answer were near. — The word translated *profit* — meaning basally surplusage, residuum, what is left over — is, rather than the word *vanity*,

abideth. The sun riseth also, and the sun goeth down, and cometh panting

in the return of things

the controlling term of Koheleth's thought; he is concerned, whether negatively or interrogatively, with the question of profit, rather than trying to make all issue finally in vanity. The idea of profit is used in a pregnant, expansible application. It begins as the plain commercial term denoting the wage or reward which, as the thing of final and supreme value, the laborer seeks beyond the work itself; it is the thing which the work exists to produce. In this every-day application the question is of negative suggestion. But the cosmic setting in which the question here appears creates a broader field of application; making it mean, What surplusage, what overflow of energy or vitality, in life as we see it and live it, what is there left over when it is done? In this application the question, while still weighted with Koheleth's agnosticism regarding future things, suggests, as above indicated, some beginnings of an answer, as if Koheleth would point out the true source of profit. — *In all his labor;* this takes man on what is most nearly the universal plane. Man is a laboring being; and the most salient fact about the mass of human life, as Koheleth looks out over it and interrogates it, is labor. As first looked upon, with its involvements of hardship, necessity, routine, drudgery, it is a depressing sight, and the more so as there seems to be no surplusage, no way by which it adds to the sum of things. But labor, as an element of life, will not miss a nobler recognition later; like the idea of profit, it has a part to play in Koheleth's philosophy, which his doubting question does not reveal at the outset.

6–31. The rest of the Proem is taken up with a specification of facts, drawn from the phenomenal world of nature

on themselves; 10 back to his place where he riseth. Going to the south, and circling to the

CHAP. I. 6.

and history, to illustrate the assertion that all is vanity, by showing on the cosmic scale how surplusage is lacking. In general it is the conception of the return of things on themselves; as if all world-processes had merely a circuit to traverse and begin again, with nothing left over to mark progress. It reminds one of the Hindoo's wheel of destiny, applied, however, not to the transmigration of souls but to the law-governed order of the universe. For the scientific and evolutionary parallel to this, see Introductory Study, pp. 27 sqq.

6. *Generation goeth*, etc. The point of this fact seems to be that, while the successive generations are always in change, yet they are so alike, so much an endless repetition of the same routine of life, that they reveal no progress from age to age; a fact which the permanence of the earth only accentuates.

7. *While for ever;* the contrast of the permanence of the earth to the transitoriness of the generations is not the point in emphasis; hence the guarded translation with the mild connective *while*, and the unprominent place given to *for ever*.

8. *The sun riseth also;* of the lordliest object in nature the same self-repeating round is observable; nothing apparently gained.

9. *Cometh panting back*, literally, *panteth* back; as if it had just breath enough to mount the height whence it can make a new start. The verb seems to express not haste but difficulty; and this conforms to the key of ideas in which all is regarded as breath, in a universe with just energy enough to keep itself running, and with no surplus.

10. *Going to the south*, etc. It seemed best, at the risk of

north, — circling, circling, goeth the
wind, and upon his circuits returneth
the wind. All streams flow unto the
sea, yet is the sea not full: to the place
whence the streams go forth, thither
they return. All things are labor-

over quaintness, to preserve the *naïveté* of this verse by translating it with rigid literalness, in meaning and order, and with a similar word-play in the words *circling* and *circuits*. The mysterious wind, the breath of the world as it were, shares in the same gyrating round as the rest. As one of the illustrations, the wind is perhaps chosen as the freest force in nature, to show how even that is enslaved to a routine. It is worth while to contrast with this use of it the employment of it in John iii. 8 to illustrate the self-directive freedom of the spiritual life.

14. *All streams*, etc. Whether Koheleth had in mind the phenomenon of cloud formation by evaporation from the sea, and the subsequent precipitation of rain, is doubtful; but the effort so to describe the fact as to bring it into the line of illustration with the others produces at least a striking coincidence with our modern account of it.

17. *All things are labor-weary;* the original word denotes the weariness that comes from effort and labor, hence the compound adjective. What is noted in man, ll. 3, 4, is ascribed here to the universe; man is by no means alone in his labor. Labor, and the exhaustion attendant on it, is a world fact; compare what is said of the sun, l. 8. — To translate *things* is more in accordance with the large sense of the passage, and a very common secondary meaning of the word (*dabar*); though in its primary meaning *words* (all

in human unsatisfaction;

weary; no man can describe it. Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor ear
20 filled with hearing. What hath been, that is what will be; and what hath been wrought, that is what will be wrought; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there aught whereof
25 it is said, "See this is new," — long

words are futile), it would make a natural, albeit narrow sense with the next clause. With the present translation the next clause expresses vividly Koheleth's sense of wonder and sadness as his imagination takes in the great weary world.

18. *Eye is not satisfied*, etc. An illustration introducing a mystery that several times occurs subsequently; see especially Survey iv. 6, 23; an illustration of the fact that man cannot get, in property or in enjoyment, enough through the senses to still his craving and be his final residuum of profit. It seems to recognize in man a nature too great for the dimensions of his environment; and thus it hints at what afterwards, through several intermediate suggestions, takes form in the idea of "eternity in the heart," Survey ii. 26.

20. *What hath been*, etc. The salient truth of the Proem, that things return on themselves, is asserted here of human history, as earlier it was asserted of nature. The same thought is repeated and enlarged upon, Survey iv. 28–32; and in connection with it is again asked the question, "What profit?" The point of the verse is the same lack of surplusage.

ago it was, in the ages that were before us. There is no remembrance of them that were of former time; and of them that are to come will there be no remembrance, among them that are to be thereafter. 30

in the self-repeating cycles of time.

CHAP. I. 10, 11.

27. Great names and small, give them merely time, melt into oblivion, as it has been, so it will be. This thought is repeated, Survey i. 85, in connection with the view of death and its leveling effect; wherein the fool is seen to have at his mercy, to waste and annul, all that the wise man has accumulated.

Thus the Proem, having touched one by one on the vital ideas of the book, ends; leaving us with the thought that, as in man's common activities, so in the great world of nature and history, there is no discernible surplusage of progress, of wisdom, of fame, to pay for all this outlay of labor. That is the large significance that the initial assertion of vanity takes. All that is outside of us can be measured by time and space measurements, and its range and limits can be known. There is no use, then, in looking there for the residuum. It must be found, if found at all, elsewhere. It will be the business of the coming sections, or Surveys, by an inductive process, not only to particularize what is here given compendiously, but also to bring into view whatever alleviating or compensating features of life there are, to make as it were a *modus vivendi* in a world of vanity. The utmost concession is made, the utmost negative; now for the positive alleviation to set over against it and make it bearable.

THE FIRST SURVEY

AN INDUCTION OF LIFE

Koheleth's experiments in life, and the sum-total of their result.

I KOHELETH, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to explore and survey by

CHAP. I. 12, 13.

What the Proem has asserted in general terms Koheleth now proceeds to substantiate by an appeal to concrete experience. To this end he assumes the position and character of Solomon, the Hebrew type both of boundless riches and of wisdom ; these resources are alike needed to make his assertion absolute and universal. If it be objected here that this assumption of character connotes an assumed or manufactured experience, and thus not conclusive as to actual fact, it may be answered that he is not proving vanity by historic fact, — for this could have established only its one case of vanity, — but emphasizing a truth that none can gainsay by putting it in its most typical and absolute statement. If it is true in the ideally extreme case, it is true for all.

LINE 1. While by the description the writer identifies himself with King Solomon, yet the name itself, Koheleth, being an assumed or symbolic one, reveals the fact that this identification is made for its literary suggestiveness ; see the Introductory Study, p. 172. — *Was king ;* this past tense would not have been used by the real Solomon ; the

wisdom concerning all that is wrought
under the heavens; this, a sad toil, 5

historic assumption is in fact too transparent to indicate any attempt to deceive.

3. *To explore and survey;* the two nearly synonymous words refer to investigation made both intensively and extensively, — seeking both the depth and the breadth of things. — *By wisdom;* wisdom is his outfit, his working-tool; and this book ranks with Proverbs, Job, and others, as a book of Wisdom. Wisdom may be regarded as, in the large sense, an intermediary, the connecting link between the pure religious consciousness on the one hand and the purely worldly on the other. Taking goodness, it says it is wise, practicable, workable; taking wickedness, it says it is fatuous, ruinous, in the long run unpractical. Thus Wisdom is an educator, leading stupid and bewildered man up to the eminence of life from which he can see his way aright. Koheleth applies it to details, and especially to difficulties; Wisdom does not see to the end, and scorns making up life with reference to something else which is not yet; but it directs man whose attitude is work toward the issues of every day and here, and toward the making of a sane, calm, joyful soul.

5. *This, a sad toil;* this very exploring by wisdom, outside of the welter of toil as it seems, is so intense that it takes its place in the sphere of labor; it becomes a kind of obsession, an inner necessity, which mocks at rest and ease. One is reminded of Milton's scholar, who "scorns delights and lives laborious days," and of the *Grammarian's Funeral* of Browning. This toil beyond the need of earth, toil at once imposed by God and loved for its own sake, is one of the mysteries of human nature with which a wise observa-

hath God given to the sons of men
to toil therewith. I have seen all
the works that are wrought under the
sun, and behold — all vanity and a
10 chase after wind. The crooked can-
not be straightened, and the lacking
cannot be numbered.

CHAP. I. 13–15.

tion must reckon ; it has its noble part to play in Koheleth's interpretation of life.

7. *All the works ;* a general sum-total, which succeeding specifications will reduce to detail : the works of skill, wealth, art, in the present Survey, the crooked and mysterious in succeeding sections.

9. *All vanity*, as it were so much using up of breath ; and *a chase after wind*, you can no more overtake any real profit or surviving substance than you can catch the wind. Not in his works " under the sun " is the surplusage and reward; whether it can be found elsewhere is yet to be seen.

10. *The crooked cannot be straightened*, etc. An instance of the numerous aphorisms which are put in, generally at summing-up points, to clinch the thought. These, it would seem, were inserted by the writer, as he went along, from his collection; see Epilogue, l. 5. Sometimes these aphorisms seem to have been composed to fit the occasion, sometimes, as coming from a compilation, they bear the marks of insertion from outside, in the fact that they deviate a little from the direct line of the thought in hand. A bit of that quality clings to the present one, which introduces, as suggested by the futile chase, its implication of the irremediable a little prematurely.

Wisdom, the outfit for the quest,

I communed with my heart, saying, "Lo, I have increased and accumulated wisdom above all that have been before me over Jerusalem, and abundantly hath my heart seen wisdom and knowledge." And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is a grasping after wind.

CHAP. I. 16, 17.

14. "*Lo, I have increased;*" the traditional Solomon, speaking of what history has ascribed to him. He, if any one, has the resources to prosecute the search after true profit; in him preëminently, if in any one, can be seen how much wisdom and knowledge can avail.

19. *And to know madness and folly;* the "largeness of heart" (1 Kings iv. 29) ascribed to King Solomon is here assumed; Koheleth is ready to explore folly as well as wisdom. Instead of taking current estimates for granted, he will see for himself; this is the inductive, as it were the scientific spirit, expressing itself in hospitality to anything that has promise, and in resolve to see things as they are. It is this appeal from hearsay or convention to fact which makes the present Survey an induction of life. The first induction from this is drawn, l. 69 sq.

21. *This also*, etc. Even wisdom, as a mere possession or accumulation, shares in the limitations of other possessions; property in knowledge is like property in everything else. — *A grasping after wind;* not the same word as the one translated *chase* above, l. 10. — In Job's account of Wisdom and of the search for it, Job xxviii. 3, there is a hint of its

on folly; — until I should see what is the good thing for the sons of men
35 to do under the heavens, all the days of their life.

art, luxury, wealth.

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards;

for himself the utmost that folly could do, in its potentiality for or against true living.

33. *On folly;* it is a mark of his scientific spirit thus freely to open the question and hear all sides.

34. *The good thing;* what philosophers call the *summum bonum*, the supreme good. Koheleth's test of this, or at least the quality here sought, is its permanence; it must avail men "all the days of their life." In other words, his quest is for the absolute, intrinsic values, those values which are unaffected by fluctuations of time and circumstance. Many things there are which afford a temporary appeasement or diversion, but the blight of transitoriness and vanity is on them all, and the fact that the heart outgrows them, or is left hungering, is evidence that they are not its true element. — The result of his laying hold on folly is postponed until he can report it as contrasted to his use of wisdom; see l. 73.

37. *Great works;* from idle pleasure and the stimulus of wine he turns toward something which, in the doing of it, calls into requisition more of his inner nature and powers. The works here described are such as would best answer to a Hebrew's esthetic ideals of life, all that bent which finds expression in art and in the gratification of tastes and the finer desires. It is thus, we may say, that a Hebrew would feed his ideal of a full-furnished life, if he had at command

I made me gardens and parks; and planted in them fruit trees of every kind; I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the tree-bearing forest. I procured men-servants and maids, and had servants born in the

CHAP. II. 5–7.

all the resources of a Solomon. We may indeed go a step further. If the Oriental were set to imagine a heaven, this would very nearly answer to it, as indeed it does to the Mohammedan paradise. One is tempted to think, therefore, that Koheleth is here depicting the dream that is taking possession of his age. In connection with the wave of speculation on immortality which Greek influences have induced, men are creating heavens, and this is about what it is in them to create. It is neither a moral ideal nor an ideal of disinterested love, it is an ideal of enjoyment and self-indulgence. In depicting it Koheleth is holding the mirror up to his age by describing what, if left to the free play of tendency, the manhood of the time would best like; and thus instead of postponing the realization of ideal to another world, or feeding a philosophic fancy upon it, he subjects it to the facts of human nature, by relating what actually follows here and now when an ideal of this sort is realized. By its success or failure here may be judged what it would be in any state or time.

All this splendor is pretty accurately what a man unacquainted with Solomon except by tradition, and unversed in royal affairs except by imagination and hearsay, would describe.

42. *The tree-bearing forest;* that is, a nursery, where young trees are reared for transplantation.

house; also great possessions of herds and flocks were mine, above all that had been before me in Jerusalem. I amassed for myself also silver and gold, and the choice treasures of kings and of the provinces; I got me men-singers and women-singers, and the voluptuous delights of the sons of men, mistresses many.

Result of the experiment: its success,

And I became great, and increased beyond all that had been before me in Jerusalem; moreover, my wisdom

CHAP. II. 7–9.

53. *Mistresses many;* the words thus translated are very obscure, but this seems most probably what is meant. This detail may be regarded as the last term in a sensual ideal of life not unlike what is expressed in Mohammedanism to-day; see Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*, pp. 239, 240.

54. *And I became great;* in the Hebrew idea, to be great and to be rich were synonymous; compare Job i. 3. — This is the first result of Koheleth's quest; he gets what he gives his heart to, and in this respect his search for good is eminently successful. If it fails to satisfy, the cause is not in its lack but in the soul which trusted to find satisfaction therein.

55. *Beyond all*, etc. This comparison with predecessors is not quite as the historical King Solomon would have described himself; as king he was only the second who had been monarch in Jerusalem.

56. *My wisdom stood by me;* this is the outfit with

stood by me. And nothing that mine
eyes craved did I withhold from them.
I kept not my heart back from any
joy; for my heart derived joy from 60

CHAP. II. 10.

which he began his survey and trial of life; see l. 3, and note; to cherish his wisdom is also the tacit condition with which he plunges into worldly dissipations and pleasures, see l. 31. And whatever fails, this, the capital stock, so to say, which he has just put into the business, this stays by him, a permanent asset. He has not, like the roué and debauchee, so recklessly buried himself in pleasure and worldliness as to have surrendered to environment the control of himself; he governs still, and governs by wisdom, not it. He is still therefore in condition to judge accurately the values and the deficits of life.

57. *Nothing . . . did I withhold;* Koheleth's ideal of life therefore is not asceticism, and if he seems later to speak for a more austere conception, it is not from ignorance of the contrasted resources. He has sounded the depths and shoals of worldly pleasure, has been diligent to hear all sides.

59. *From any joy;* the free play of the joyous, healthy faculties of life. Koheleth concedes, in spite of the pessimistic and agnostic elements of his view, that joy is normal, and that the cultivation of enjoyment in such way that wisdom still stands by him is not a thing to be despised or decried. This concession he seems to be making as a kind of offset to the reactionary and perhaps old fogy position he has taken in relation to the thinking and sentiment of his time; see Introductory Study, p. 47.

60. *Derived joy from all my labor;* the joy comes, it is to be noted, from the labor, not from the eventualized results

all my labor; and this was my portion from all my labor.

its failure; And I turned toward all my works, which my hands had wrought, and
65 toward the labor which I had labored

of it, or from the reward that he gets for it. This he records here as a fact in his induction; but later he makes this the pivotal idea of his thought; there is nothing better, he repeatedly says, than to rejoice in one's labor. "The main satisfaction of life," said President Eliot to the newsboys, "after the domestic joys, is the accomplishment of something. Perhaps you think the satisfaction is in having done it? No; it is in doing it."

61. *This was my portion;* what he here records as his own portion, proved such by actual experience, he later asserts as every man's portion, as that which is most central in human life; see ii. 69. Much is made throughout the book of man's portion; see ii. 69; iii. 122; v. 149; it is regarded as that which, independently of time, place, or circumstance, is most the man's own.

63. *Turned toward all my works;* the works themselves, the buildings, the parks, the treasures, the luxuries, afforded no joy; as soon as the creative zest was removed from them, and they stood there externalized, extrinsic, they were but vanity; they added nothing of surplusage to his soul's upbuilding.

64. *And toward the labor;* nor was the labor itself, from the doing of which he had derived joy, a source of profit considered as something to be paid for or rewarded by something exterior to itself. It did not, as labor, add to the assets of life.

to do; and behold — all vanity and a chase after wind; and no profit under the sun.

and the residue it yielded.

And I turned to look at wisdom and madness and folly; — for what doeth the man who cometh after the

Chap. II. 11, 12.

67. *No profit under the sun;* see Proem, l. 3, note.

69. *Turned to look;* having assessed the external resources of life, its wealth and art and luxury, Koheleth turns to judge the inner outfit; wisdom and madness and folly are, so to say, candidates for the direction and control of life. It will be remembered that he opened the question of madness and folly along with that of wisdom (see l. 19, and note), in order to test these anew and leave nothing to hearsay or convention, nothing untried that promises any result.

70. *Madness*, as distinguished from folly, seems to refer to that enthusiastic, exalted, frenzied state of mind which in Eastern countries is associated with prophetic utterance, and which accordingly is much heeded as a source of counsel and guidance. The contrast, then, is between the calm, level head of wisdom, as a guide of life, and the occasional exalted state of madness; and it is perhaps significant that in the comparison madness sinks out of the account entirely, as no longer in competition. Koheleth's pronouncement is rather for the calmer, more judicial mood, the wise attitude which weighs all sides. — *Folly* is so often resorted to by the thoughtless that it cannot well be left out of account as a candidate for the guidance of life; and indeed it has alluring aspects.

70. *For what doeth the man*, etc. The implication of this

king, — him whom they made king so long ago? And I saw that there is superiority of wisdom over folly,

abrupt question seems to be that Koheleth is the fitting one to balance up the values of life, for if he, the king, cannot pass true judgment, no successor, no humbler or poorer man, can. A responsibility rests on him to give the world a true assessment of things.

72. *Whom they made king so long ago.* An obscure passage, of which this seems on the whole the clearest sense. Koheleth thus identifies the king from whom such judgment of wisdom and folly is expected with the king whose historic renown for wisdom and riches puts him in the best position for judging. The reference to a historic king reminds one of Tennyson's reference to Arthur ; *Idylls of the King*, Epilogue : —

> " that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
> And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still."

Koheleth, in so speaking of Solomon, either momentarily forgets that he is posing himself as Solomon, or, what is more likely, takes this furtive way of hinting that his assumption of the Solomon rôle is after all only an assumption.

74. *Superiority of wisdom ;* the word translated *superiority* is the word יִתְרוֹן, profit, or surplusage ; it names the very thing after which, as he looks over the world, Koheleth is supremely seeking. He asked, " What profit ? " (Proem, l. 3) ; he has failed to find it in external things (l. 67 above) ; and now, in a comparative sense, he has found a profit, an inner surplusage, in wisdom. Wisdom is

like the superiority of light over darkness. As for the wise man, his eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness.

II

The final event,

YET I know that one event befalleth them all. And I said in my heart,

a profit as compared with folly, as far superior as light is to darkness, for it is an illumination of life; its possessor is a seeing man, not a groping blind one.

76. *As for the wise man*, etc. Another adage from Koheleth's store, brought in here to sum up the thought. It describes very well the spirit in which Koheleth made such wholesale trial of life's resources, dangers included, as contrasted with the heedless stupidity of the fool, who lets the evil risks of life overwhelm him; compare l. 56, note.

79. *Yet I know*, etc. The contrast here suggested — the polar opposite of wisdom and folly in their potencies for life, yet the absolute oneness of event when all is over — is so natural that in our translation, as well as in the Masoretic text, the clause is put merely as the afterthought of the verse; but so great a transition of thought grows from it that it merits being set off by a section numeral as here.

Wisdom, the highest that he has found under the sun, the first thing to possess an element of intrinsic profit, is all at once confronted with the universal event of death, which reveals such an absolute leveling of conditions that no grades or varieties in human character avail against it. The fact seems to bring all Koheleth's discoveries to

with its bewildering invasion of man's work and plans.

"As is the destiny of the fool, so also shall it befall even me; — why, then, am I wise beyond the demand?"

a standstill on the threshold of his quest of life; it is the thing that disturbs him most, and presses from him his bitterest words; compare ii. 58; v. 123. To face this universal event in all its rigor, blinking no aspect of it, and to maintain an undaunted life before it, is the supreme achievement of Koheleth's book.

83. *Wise beyond the demand;* so I venture to render אָז יוֹתֵר, which uses still the same idea expressed by profit, surplusage. It refers to wisdom *beyond* what is needed to get through this earthly life. If death reduces all eventually to one level, then in being wise he is overcapitalizing his life, laying out a superfluity of endowment as compared with the returns. He could attain the same end and be a fool, and so could save all the trouble and sorrow that wisdom confessedly costs him; compare ll. 5, 21, and notes. Why, then, is he taking all the pains to be wise and deep-seeing and foreseeing, if all the profit of it is so temporary, annulled by death? It is the inevitable question of thinkers and poets in the leveling presence of mortality. Tennyson draws its conclusion well: —

> "'T were hardly worth my while to choose
> Of things all mortal, or to use
> A little patience ere I die," —

if death were seen as death absolute.

Yet Koheleth's question, "Why, then, am I wise beyond the demand?" does not wholly dismiss the subject. The existence of this superfluity of endowment is to be reckoned with. Wisdom beyond the demand is a malady, an obsession

And in my heart I said that this too
is vanity. For alike of the wise and
of the fool is there no remembrance
for ever; because that already in the
days to come all will have been for-

CHAP. II. 15, 16.

of man; compare l. 5, and note. It makes him too large for his environment, just as eternity in the heart (see ii. 27) makes him too large for the world of time; it is a superfluity of asset which lives, in Browning's phrase, "referring to some state of life unknown," see Introductory Study, p. 73. This state of life unknown, however, is just what Koheleth has not yet the clear insight to see; it is yet to be revealed. He has, so to say, the eyes without the vision. This is the pathos of his lot, and of his book. Yet on the other hand, this and other surplusages of life are the things that, item by item, he so sets over against the empty speculations on futurity of his day that in the final sum-total they outbalance them, making life the potency of victory instead of a failure; see Introductory Study, pp. 71 sqq.

84. *And in my heart I said.* A series of sentences beginning here, — see also ll. 91, 94, 103, — put in the past tense, record Koheleth's first conclusion, describing the first or phenomenal indication of things, which may or may not correspond to his final summing up. True as his present observations are from the given data, as a matter of fact they are eventually answered by compensating things far deeper in nature.

86. *No remembrance for ever;* an application to the specific case of wise and fool of what has already been affirmed of all, Proem, l. 27.

gotten. And oh! how is it that the
wise man dieth just like the fool?
And I hated life; for evil to me
was the work that is wrought under
the sun; for all is vanity and a chase
after wind. And I hated all my labor
which I had labored under the sun;

CHAP. II. 16–18.

89. *And oh! how is it*, etc. Koheleth's most poignant reflection, as touching the future, relates not to the survival of the soul or the consciousness, as with us, but to the survival of wisdom; it is a thing too valuable to die, it seems made for some other destiny. Besides, being the only thing he has discovered with an element of profit or surplusage, its extinction seems to close the prospect for immortality; this is really his deepest cause of dismay, because his approach to the idea of immortality, as it proceeds by the thought of surplusage or overflow of life, seems here to receive its severest check.

91. *And I hated life;* the first result of this leveling catastrophe is to take the apparent value out of life. All its achievements and accumulations, gained with so much toil, must be dissipated, or at least must take the risk of being brought to nothing by fools. It is to this that the significance of life, even its highest endowment of wisdom, is brought when we reckon up its net proceeds this side of the grave. Only a question of time it is, when all that can be weighed or measured or valued outside of the soul shall pass away.

94. *All my labor;* a reminiscence of his kingly enterprises, ll. 37 sqq., and perhaps, too, a thought of the disgust that takes the place of the joy in his labor that he had in the time of it, l. 60.

because I must leave it to the man
who shall be after me, — and who
knoweth whether he will be a wise
man or a fool? yet will he have power
over all my labor which I have la-
bored, and wherein I have been wise
under the sun. This too is vanity.

And I revolved this until it made
my heart despair concerning all the
labor which I had labored under the
sun. For there shall be a man whose

CHAP. II. 18–21.

96. *The man who shall be after me;* as Koheleth is assuming the character of Solomon, this may ascribe to him a misgiving about Rehoboam, whose character, as given in 1 Kings xii., may well have embittered to Solomon the prospect of the succession. The allusion to the king who is a boy, in vi. l. 76, is conformed, whether so intended or not, to the character of young Rehoboam.

99. *Yet will he have power;* as soon as the labor is externalized in an accomplished work or accumulation it is at the mercy of every arbitrary hand, to profane or pervert or annul; all its inwardness, all that makes it vital, is gone from it.

103. *And I revolved this;* the Hebrew word contains the same idea of turning over in the mind which our language has expressed in the word *revolve.* — *Until it made my heart despair;* Koheleth has recognized the fact in its extreme poignancy; it has preyed upon his mind.

106. *There shall be a man;* this leveling of condition by death leads to a mere accidental distribution of what are

labor is in wisdom and in knowledge
and in skill; yet to a man who hath
not labored therein must he leave it
as his portion. This also is vanity
and a great evil. For what remain-
eth to man in all his labor and in his
heart's endeavor, wherein he laboreth
under the sun? For all his days are
sorrows, and his toil is vexation; also

CHAP. II. 21–23.

regarded as the rewards and blessings of life; a man's goods are no guarantee of his possession of wisdom or knowledge or skill, for they may become the heritage of one who has put nothing of himself into them. They are not a real reward, then, for the man and his portion do not infallibly go together.

110. *As his portion;* and a very barren portion, if he has not had the blessing of the labor; it is nothing inner, like the portion Koheleth received in his enterprises; see l. 61, above.

111. *What remaineth?* This is virtually the same question of residuum, surplusage, that Koheleth asked at the beginning of the Proem; only now behind the question is the record of an elaborate course of labor and achievement on the largest scale, labor which ought to yield results if anything can.

112. *In his heart's endeavor;* the labor is thus supposed to take into itself his supreme desire and ideal, and the question asks after a residuum both outer and inner.

114. *For all his days are sorrows,* etc.; compare l. 5, and note. Of reward as measured in terms of cash value, or of

by night his heart resteth not. This
too is vanity, yea this.

III

THERE is no good in man save

CHAP. II. 23, 24.

satisfying achievement, there is no real residue, compare l. 64, note ; and now the labor itself yields more hardship than ease, merely wears out the machinery. The question, What remaineth ? is thus brought to the point where the answer must be crucial. Vanity thus far, — what is there solid and real ?

118. This third section introduces the answer or solution; what there is, if anything, real in a life of toil such as is the general lot of man. Toward this solution he has so limited the question that nothing remains but an inner blessing.

There is no good in man ; as compared with the similar assertion, Survey ii. 68, the present omits the sign of the comparative, thus making the things here enumerated the only good. In this first statement of life's residuum Koheleth reduces to the baldest and most uncompromising terms, as if he would recognize the best available as a kind of *pis aller*. This he does probably because all around him men are cherishing the glamour of a speculative post-obituary future ; it is his austere answer to the wordiness of his time. But as he goes on in his Surveys, he comes to see more and more clearly that this very lot is a good absolutely and intrinsically, and he amplifies and enriches it into a sterling programme of life ; see the successive summaries, Survey ii. 30, 67 ; iii. 117 ; iv. 81 ; v. 140 ; vi. 103 ; vii. 8. This gradation and climax of summary is one of the most striking notes of homogeneity and progress in the book ;

The solution with God;

to eat and drink and make his soul see
120 good in his labor; but also this, I saw
that this, is from the hand of God.

we can see by these that he has one line of thought, and that his mood is under control.

119. *To eat and drink;* neither here nor anywhere else in Koheleth are eating and drinking a symbol of sensuality; rather they symbolize well-being and a contented mind. The good of life is here reduced to lowest and therefore most universal terms. If when a man worries over his work he cannot sleep (see l. 116), so conversely, when a man enjoys his work he can eat, he has a good appetite. The contrast drawn below, between righteous and sinner, turns not on having more or less to eat, but on labor with or without an inner compensation. To be able to eat and drink connotes the spontaneous enjoyment of existence, as if all were just as it should be. — *And make his soul see good*, that is, enjoy his labor, as seeing therein the truest expression of his soul. This is the central point of all, — man's work, that which takes into itself his talents, his endowments, his interests, his creative powers. The succeeding amplifications of this idea (see two notes preceding) show clearly that man's work, with what it involves, represents Koheleth's deepest solution of life. "The attitude of work," says Arthur Hugh Clough, "is the only one in which one can see things properly." "It cannot be too often repeated," says William Morris, "that the true incentive to useful and happy labor is, and must be, pleasure in the work itself."

120. *But also;* as much as to say, humble as this seems, it is really great; it is the true solution of life.

121. *From the hand of God;* or, as Koheleth elsewhere

For who may eat, or who may have enjoyment, except from Him? For to a man that is good in His sight He giveth wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner He giveth toil,

whose approving response is revealed in wisdom and knowledge and joy.

expresses it, it is man's portion; see ii. 69; iii. 126; v. 149. The significance of it as a gift is repeatedly enlarged upon; see especially v. 142.

123. *Except from Him;* there is an uncertainty of reading here between "Him" (*except from Him*) and "me" (*more than I*). I have chosen the former, as more at one with the whole passage. This expression, if the true reading, is Koheleth's own limitation of his eating and enjoyment; he recognizes that the very possession of such pleasure, undisturbed by care or guilt, is an indication of God's approval and response.

125. *Wisdom, and knowledge, and joy;* a specification of what it means when one's soul sees good in his labor. It is the inner, the intrinsic resultant of a work well done; the man has these within, however vain is all without, and this is the gift attached to life, the gift of God. If a man has these, he has no occasion to seek to other worlds or future times, he has the core of life here.

126. *He giveth toil;* another way of saying the sinner has nothing intrinsic left, no surplusage, only his labor for his pains. To be a sinner is, by the very terms of the Wisdom philosophy, to choose the way of folly, the way that lacks wisdom; here also the wisdom and the knowledge and the joy are recognized not merely as means to accomplish ends, but as the fibre of life itself, without which labor is only toil.

to gather, and to amass, in order to
give to him that is good in the sight
of God, — which, truly, is vanity, and
130 a chase after wind.

CHAP. II. 26.

127. *In order to give;* not that the possessions of the wicked are taken arbitrarily and given to the good; but if the good stand the same chance of inheritance as the foolish (compare l. 108), all the fruit of toil *may* go to him. This is perhaps Koheleth's way of saying the meek shall inherit the earth; see Psalm xxxvii. 11.

129. *Which, truly,* etc. This turn is adopted to show that the vanity applies to the last thing named. This is certainly true; it is not so clear, however, that Koheleth intends it to apply to the compensating gift of God mentioned before, which rather seems to be regarded as the counterweight to vanity.

Thus, as Koheleth in his induction has taken up and tested the facts of life, he has steered the solution step by step away from the external and superficial to the intrinsic endowment of soul which enriches life in the midst of toil and makes labor itself an instrument of its joy. He has had a glimpse, too, of the truth that there is something deeper still, as yet unresolved, which may prove to be a surplusage, a something over, to answer his quest.

THE SECOND SURVEY

TIMES AND SEASONS

TO everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.

The thesis of the Survey.

Chap. iii. 1.

From the world of environment, with its labors, its enterprises, its enjoyments, Koheleth now turns to the world of time; and the proposition with which he sets out, with its broad universality, corresponds in scale to his avowal in the First Survey that his concern is with "all that is wrought under the heavens;" see i. 4. So here, we may say, his thought seeks to range over all the times available in the present state of existence; and just as in the previous Survey the present world has furnished field for all the powers and compensations of the soul, without necessity of completion in another world, so here the present time will be found sufficient to itself, without the necessity of supplementation by a differently conditioned eternity.

Line 1. *A season, and a time.* The distinction is much the same as between the Greek καιρός and χρόνος. The lapse of time (χρόνος) brings to everything its fitting time or occasion (καιρός).

2. *Every purpose under heaven.* The writer is contemplating, in a cosmic sense, the world of purpose as apart from moral aspects; every purpose for the present argu-

I

How the most contrary things have their season, wherein they are timely.

A TIME to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to lament, and a time to exult; a time to scatter stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a

CHAP. III. 2–6.

ment may be regarded as legitimate and normal. The question of evil purpose comes up in other connections.

4 sqq. This paragraph amplifies the proposition by a series of illustrative details; the object evidently being to show what contrary and mutually exclusive things may coexist in a world wherein so many purposes are cherished. The order of the details is, perhaps designedly, left rather miscellaneous, as better showing the infinite variety of things; though at the beginning Koheleth seems to be thinking more of the great elemental events and experiences of life, and toward the end more of the attitude and conduct in which these are naturally reflected. The animus of the enumeration seems to be directed against the idea of seeking greater field or opportunity in some time not yet determined; as much as to say the whole world of opportunity is before us now.

time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to rend, and a time to mend; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

II

Man's work also has its time;

WHAT profit hath the worker, in that wherein he laboreth?

CHAP. III. 6–9.

21 sq. *What profit hath the worker?* The same question that is asked at the beginning, Proem, l. 3; repeated here for the sake of its application to the world of time. The implication of it here is, If so various purposes are on occasion timely, and if man has merely to respond to occasion, doing what wisdom dictates at the juncture, — thus being, as it were, a mere echo to the impulse of the time, — what is there more, what surplusage yielded, to add to manhood assets? The question has still its doubtful outlook; but it is to be noted here that Koheleth does not immediately reduce the answer to vanity; he goes on as if he had in mind at least a partial answer.

21. *The worker;* Koheleth, though assuming the rôle of a king, has the dialect, the range of thought, the attitude, not of the king but of the wage-worker. His controlling question, What profit? represents the worker's search for reward, the craving of one who, placed in this world by no choice of his own, and subject to a sternly exacting environment, would use the world to best purpose and secure the true values of life.

but in it is a strain of eternity, to give it depth and character.

I have seen the toil which God hath given to the sons of men, to toil
25 therein. Everything hath He made beautiful in its time; also He hath

CHAP. III. 10, 11.

23. *I have seen the toil.* Koheleth uses words in this connection which recognize three aspects or elements of work. The work recognized in the *worker*, l. 21, is that which shapes or accomplishes, brings some worthy product to pass; and it will be noted that the profit about which he asks follows supposably this noblest concept of work. The work recognized in *laboreth*, l. 22, is the activity or effort involved in work, work as a form of energy. The *toil* in the present line names the drudgery and routine and hardship of which work is capable, and which as one looks over the toiling world seems so sadly its prevailing character. It is to be noted, as an indication of Koheleth's constructive thought, that the redeeming features of beauty and eternity are mentioned in connection with this grimmest aspect of work; he sees them shining beyond not merely the triumph of achievement, but the welter of toil.

25. *Everything hath He made beautiful;* things as well as persons, the work and the worker, the agent and the event, alike.

26. *In its time;* the timeliness of a thing is its beauty; without its occasion as a complementing element, it is only the divided half of a fitting result, and so inert or abnormal. In this idea Koheleth seems to come more in sight of a cosmos or ordered system of things, and in the present Survey we hear very little of that undertone of vanity which was so insistent in the Proem and the First Survey. A solution of life is beginning to shape itself.

put eternity in their heart; — yet not
so that man findeth out the work

CHAP. III. 11.

27. *Eternity in their heart;* some translate this *the world*, it is hard to see why, unless through incapacity to understand the idea, for if the word הָעֹלָם (*ha-olam*) does not mean eternity, then the Hebrew language has no word for eternity. If we regard it as meaning the world, we must still understand it as the world *of time;* it expresses illimitable time as our word universe expresses the illimitable world of space. And here the word seems to be set by contrast to time; as much as to have said, Everything is beautiful as related to its fitting time, but it has more than mere fitness to time in it; it has a pulsation of the timeless, the permanent, the intrinsic. In the heart of things there is a power and purpose which stretches beyond the place or period in which it is fulfilling its function. This idea is part of Koheleth's supreme thought, which is that life should be made up not with reference to its ending, but to its continuance; not with reference to relinquishing the work in order to receive its wage, but with reference to the work as it is intrinsically, and as it is fitted for permanence. So his mention of eternity in the heart is another element in which man is too large for his dwelling-place; he is too large for his earth-bounded time, just as, with reference to his environment, he is obsessed by a disease of research (see i. 5), and with wisdom "beyond the demand" (i. 83). In this endowment of man we see that Koheleth is going far to offset the agnosticism toward futurity which is later asserted so emphatically; he is, in fact, expressing the eternal life in terms of work rather than making it a matter of dreams and philosophical speculation.

27. *Yet not so;* more literally *without man's finding*, etc.

which God hath wrought, from the
30 beginning, and to the end. I know
that there is no good in them, save to

CHAP. III. 11, 12.

By this clause he limits his idea of eternity in the heart to the *power* of eternity, denying to it the element of prediction or supernatural insight. Man as a working being has no business with that knowledge of origins or destinies which belongs to God; his eternity is expressed in terms of work; his work, as pointing to some "far-off divine event" is his prophecy of it. Tennyson has reproduced the thought of this verse very accurately in his *Two Voices*, both as regards the mystic prophecy and as regards the limitation of man's insight: —

"'Here sits he shaping wings to fly:
His heart forebodes a mystery:
He names the name Eternity.
. . . . . .
"'He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

"'The end and the beginning vex
His reason: many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.'"

Here, we may say, Koheleth ascribes to man all that is essential in immortality, all the energy and motive-power of it, while setting himself firmly against regarding it as prompting to some phase of fortune-telling, and thus favoring the uncanny business of magic, necromancy, or soothsaying on the one hand, or of philosophic speculation, which is a kind of psychic research, on the other. For the relation of all this to his age and its thought, see Introductory Study, pp. 74–78.

31. *In them;* the antecedent to this pronoun, it will be

rejoice and to do good in their life;
and so of every man, that he should
eat and drink and see good in all his

noted, is *everything;* Koheleth first defines the good of life for the world of life in general. — *To rejoice and to do good;* joy is the symbol of normal working, the indication that all the forces of life are acting together in health and unison. — *To do good* is not the New Testament idea of seeking the weal of men by beneficence; Koheleth's age was not ripe for the fullness of this conception yet. Nor is it the mere thought of getting the good of life, as the margin of the Revised Version puts it. Spoken of "everything" as it is here, it seems nearly to answer to the fulfillment of function, accomplishing the object that it was made for.

32. *And so of every man;* a thing analogous to what has been asserted of everything is applied now to the life of man.

33. *Should eat and drink;* if we bring over the analogy of l. 31 as suggesting this of man, then eating and drinking is for man with eternity in his heart what rejoicing is for everything, it is the symbol of healthy and happy life; compare on i. 119. "They eat and drink, not because 'to-morrow we die,' but because their day has a taste in it of eternity; their to-morrow suggests not death but life. Life's present tense is to them not only an existence but a becoming." — Brierly, *Ourselves and the Universe*, p. 223.

34. *And see good in all his labor* corresponds, in the same parallel, to doing good in life; it is taking labor, which is man's prevailing lot, and getting from it its capacity for blessing and upbuilding. As we compare the passages of

35 labor, — which is the gift of God. I know that everything God doeth shall be for ever; to it there is no adding, and from it there is no subtracting;

CHAP. III. 13, 14.

Koheleth wherein labor is spoken of we cannot resist the conclusion that in labor, rightly accepted and done, lies in great part his solution of this earthly life; we can put his sentiment by the side of John Burroughs's words: "Blessed is the man who has some congenial work, some occupation in which he can put his heart, and which affords a complete outlet to all the forces there are in him." — *Literary Values*, p. 250.

35. *Which is the gift of God;* note how many times Koheleth calls just this thing, or some aspect of it, God's gift; compare i. 121–124; iii. 126; see also what is said of man's portion, i. 61, note.

36. *Shall be for ever;* the permanent work of God seems to be held up here as a type for man's work to emulate. Man has eternity in his heart, and God's gift to him is the power of seeing good in his labor and of enjoying life accordingly; and now God's eternal work stands before him to teach him the value of his, and to be an object-lesson of the permanent and intrinsic.

37. *No adding nor subtracting;* Koheleth is seeking for absolute values, unchanged by time and circumstance; and he finds them in God's work, the eternal work itself, just as he has failed to find them in the reward of work or even in its products. Here there is something not subject to vanity; and man's nearest contact with it is wreaking on his own work the wealth of a heart in which God has put eternity.

and God hath so done that men should fear before Him. That which is, long ago it was; and that which is to be already hath been; and God will require that which hath been banished.

CHAP. III. 14, 15.

39. *That men should fear before Him;* it is the contemplation of God's changeless work which is calculated to rouse fear, or perhaps we may say reverence, in man; and it is such fear rather than idle speculation on futurity which is of avail for life, because such reverence is a source of motive. This is what Koheleth sets over against the fruitless philosophizings of his time. One is reminded of Tennyson's

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell."

40. *That which is*, etc. In the Proem, l. 25, this assertion has been made as an illustration of the self-returning round of things without surplusage; here it is made as the illustration of the permanence of God's work. It follows as a corollary from the fact that everything has its time. The thing has not passed out of existence; it cannot be driven away (or banished) forever; it is merely, so to say, in another part of its orbit (compare the idea of recurring cycles in the Proem), merely out of its fitting time; and when the juncture for it comes again, it will come.

43. *Banished;* literally *driven away*. It seems to refer in a general and vague way to those customs or tendencies in men, good or evil, which men are most concerned to stamp out when, as we say, they fight against nature. Such an attempt is fighting against God's work.

III

A time likewise for judgment,

AND moreover I saw under the sun:
45 the place of judgment, that wickedness
was there; and the place of righteous-
ness, that wickedness was there. I said
in my heart, "The righteous and the
wicked God will judge; for there too

CHAP. III. 16, 17.

44. *And moreover I saw;* Koheleth turns for a moment to the palpable evils under the sun, not, however, to discuss them, except under the one aspect of their relation to times. The more detailed discussion of human evil and perversity is the work of the next Survey.

45, 47. *That wickedness was there;* Koheleth has been contemplating the sphere of God's work, where is constancy and permanence; but now turning to things "under the sun," he sees how in the places where man's work should be likest God's, in the places of judgment and righteousness, man's work may squarely traverse its ideal. And for a time he may have it so, may seem to have turned the world's affairs into a perverted channel. But he does not reckon with the element of time.

49. *God will judge;* not in the sense of condemnation, for righteous are included with wicked; but in the sense of setting the right and wrong of things in their true light, and in God's light, so that all shall get their just due. — *For there too;* namely, in the place of judgment and righteousness. What has been said about the time for everything is true of judgment; that is merely a particular instance of a universal truth.

is a time for every purpose and for every work."

I said in my heart, "For the sake of the sons of men this is, for God to prove them and for them to see that by nature they are beast." For the sons

which in the present is veiled for educative ends.

CHAP. III. 17, 18.

52. *For the sake of the sons of men this is.* What does *this* refer to? I think in a general sense to the fact that judgment is veiled. For a time everything may seem chance and confusion; wickedness rampant, no authoritative verdict obtainable. How can we tell what standard of things shall survive and be eternal? And why should it be so confused? why is there not a mechanically working law of right and wrong like a law of nature? Koheleth's answer here is, there is an educative value in this very uncertainty.

53. *For God to prove them*, etc. In two ways this educative value is apparent: for one thing, it opens a chance for him to be proved, and to develop wisdom of character, which could not be if judgment and righteousness were forced unerringly upon men's acts; for another, it forces him back to the realm of the animal, and makes him work out his lot here rather than in the unconditioned realm of the God.

55. *By nature;* literally *for themselves.* It seems to refer to the centre of man's existence, what he is at bottom, so far as appearance and apparent destiny go. — *Are beast;* or as in modern diction we should say, are animal. The one aspect in which man is here regarded as identical with the animal is the *chance* that controls his life, a chance that has been led up to by contemplation of the chance,

of men are chance, and chance is the beast, and one hap befalleth them. As dieth the one, so dieth the other; and preëminence of man over beast is
60 there none; for all is a vapor. All go to one place: all are from the dust,

or perversity, that characterizes his highest acts, judgment and righteousness. The contrast to this has been described, ll. 35–38, in the work of God, which is so unerringly perfect that nothing can be added or subtracted, nor has it elements of transitoriness. Man, Koheleth implies, is not like God in this, though he has a strain of eternity and a capacity of fearing God; he is like the beast, his work has such an element of chance that he must wait on times for his ideals to get their due. It is good for him, in some respects, to know he is animal, just as it is good for him in some respects to know that he is only a little lower than God; compare Psalm viii. 5.

58. *As dieth the one;* all through this section about man and beast there is a hardness and bluntness of expression which seems to betoken a polemic spirit; Koheleth is not merely giving voice to melancholy musings on death, but making good his case against some error of his time, and to this end is portraying the case in the most uncompromising terms it will bear. As striking contrast to this truculent spirit, compare Job's musings on a like problem, Job xiv. 7–15. What this error — or shallowness — of the time is has been already identified with the popular doctrine of immortality; see Introductory Study, p. 44.

60. *A vapor;* the same word elsewhere translated *vanity;* the primary meaning seems more expressive here. — *All*

and all return to dust. Who knoweth
the spirit of the sons of men, whether
it mounteth upward, and the spirit of
the beast, whether it goeth downward
to the earth?

CHAP. III. 21.

go to one place; as the succeeding clause specifies, the place *after* death is not what Koheleth is thinking of, but simply the dust, just as for the present consideration he is thinking merely of the phenomenal life of man, that wherein he is identical with the animal. He is concerned with what we can see, the body, the material life, and views this as a scientist would, confining himself to what the senses can prove.

62. *Who knoweth the spirit,* etc. The question about the body cannot but raise the counter question, what of the spirit? And the scientific answer, so obviously true still, is, that there is no more ground, from a phenomenal point of view, for saying the spirit survives than for saying the body survives.

63. *Whether it mounteth upward;* Koheleth is here evidently dealing with a current speculation of his day that the difference between man and beast is in the specific gravity, so to say, of their breath or spirit. This has the mark of a rather refined philosophical notion, put forth, it would seem, in the interest of immortality, and in itself shows that the current doctrine was a theory alone, not a surge of spiritual life seeking its immortal sphere; see Introductory Study, p. 51. Koheleth combats the doctrine, not by denying it, but by asserting that there is no proving it. We do not know. Thus he takes the scientific attitude toward it, the attitude which demands verification.

IV

The solution: to rejoice in one's own works, as fitting to the seen present not the problematic future.

WHEREFORE I saw that there is nothing better than that man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

CHAP. III. 22.

67. *Wherefore I saw*, etc. This conclusion, or solution, is given briefly, just enough to bring to mind what has been more fully expressed in ll. 30–35. If, as the upshot of the Survey, it shuts man up to this moment of being, it also sets before him a resource worthy of his best powers, in the work that contains such noble possibilities, and in the surge of eternity which vitalizes it.

68. *Should rejoice in his own works;* in this summary he leaves out the eating and drinking (compare l. 33), and this shows that it is not they, as sensual indulgence, but the works, which for him focus the meaning of life, and they are merely symbols of the well-being of the man. — The word translated *works* is the one that represents work in its nobler creative aspect; see note on l. 23.

69. *That is his portion;* that is, the rejoicing is his portion, what he gets out of work, just as in the First Survey, l. 60, Koheleth found it was his own. Man is a creative being, and in thus emulating the activity of God is his joy.

70. *Who shall bring him to see;* here again is not a denial of the fact of immortality, but only of the seeing of the fact.

71. *What shall be after him;* Koheleth's imagination refuses to think of a man as surviving the shock of death; and what comes thereafter is thought of somewhat crudely as after *him*, — as if he were no more. Similarly, iv. 44.

THE THIRD SURVEY

IN A CROOKED WORLD

I

AND I turned again, and saw all the oppressions that are

Particulars of the Survey:

CHAP. IV. 1.

LINE 1. *And I turned again;* Koheleth's phrase for making transition to a new fact in his survey of things; compare l. 23. Having in a general way traversed the field of life, both as related to environment (First Survey) and as related to time (Second Survey), and having deduced therefrom the heartening lesson of wisdom and timely work, he now turns to the more baffling ways of men. He has already hinted in the Second Survey, ll. 44–47, at the perversities that we find in high places; here he extends the indictment to all the relations of men, which, being pervaded with evil, suffer some discount from the ideal of a perfect order of righteousness. The object of the present Survey, it would seem, is to propose some rational way of life in the midst of things as they are, when all human discounts are made.

2. *All the oppressions;* Koheleth has seen all the labors (cf. Second Survey, l. 23); now by a similar large outlook he sees, the world over, the heartlessness of those who have the upper hand, and its cruel results. There must needs be high and low, stupid and clever, controller and controlled;

1. Cruelties of the upper hand toward inferiors.

wrought under the sun; and behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and from the hand of their oppressors outrage, — and they had no comforter. And I praised

and the evil that besets these relations is lack of sympathy, the man brutally doing what he has might and opportunity to do, regardless of the misery he makes, or the law he transgresses. This fact touches the very heart of that lack which Koheleth dimly discerns in his world and dispensation, — the lack of the free outflow of human love.

4. *The tears of the oppressed;* here, as everywhere, Koheleth reveals his sympathies with the under classes; it is for them, the ones on whom the burdens of life fall heaviest, that he is working out this chapter and the whole book. The repetition of the phrase, "and they had no comforter," conveys this sympathy in a very reserved yet powerful way.

6. *Outrage;* the violence that passes all bounds of decency or expediency. The fact is portrayed in strong enough terms to include the extreme; there is a kind of overflow, or superfluity (cf. First Survey, l. 83), even in human heartlessness, which evinces the greatness of man's nature. — *And they had no comforter;* the pathos of the situation put into a repeat, a kind of refrain; see previous note.

7. *And I praised the dead;* in the First Survey, l. 91, Koheleth's immediate and preliminary conclusion, the verdict as it were of his impulse, was, "And I hated life." The present verse is a similar impulse verdict. If he comes later upon a consideration which mitigates the sting and the evil, as in fact he does, yet it may be seen that he has been as

the dead, who are already dead, more
than the living, who are living yet;
and, as better than they both, him 10
who hath not yet been, who hath not
seen the evil work that is wrought
under the sun.

And I saw all labor, and all skill in

low in the depths as any for whom he is writing. Many abide in their first verdict, the verdict of sentiment, and shape their life's procedure on it; this, however, is not the philosophic attitude. For the present, though, he leaves this view of oppressions where it is, in order to gather other facts that consort with it, in preparation for a conclusion which shall cover them all.

11. *Hath not yet been;* a similar longing for the lot of the "hidden, untimely birth," pressed from him by his own suffering, has been uttered by Job, iii. 16. The present utterance, rising from the view of the suffering of all oppressed, is more deliberate and calm, though still the outcry of feeling rather than the deduction of logic.

12. *Hath not seen;* it is hard to say which gives greater pain, the suffering of oppression or the seeing of the evil. Koheleth, who has the world burden on his heart, has the pain of the sympathizer, of him who sees and would alleviate; and at first it seems to him that no life at all were better than life which must be torn with the fellow-suffering of such sights. It is his unconscious preparation for the manhood stage wherein love shall have free course and expression; cf. Introductory Study, pp. 145 sqq.

14–22. As the first paragraph contemplated evils from

2. Rivalries between equals, impairing, as also does indolent folly,

15 work, that it is cause of envy to a man from his neighbor. This also is vanity, and a chase after wind. And though the fool folding his hand eat-

those who have the upper hand, this turns to the evils that may exist between equals.

14. *All labor.* Turning again to the labor which has been so much in his mind, Koheleth sees a new aspect of it more germane to the present stage of discussion; not the great tide or welter of it now, as in Survey i. 7, ii. 23, but that aspect of it which ought naturally to minister joy and satisfaction (cf. Survey i. 60, 119; ii. 34, 68), namely, its skill, the individuality which makes it as it were a fine art. Even from the side of labor, than which there is "nothing better," there is a discount to be reckoned, on account of man's hard heart.

15. *Cause of envy.* All the rivalries, the jealousies, the competitions of business come to mind in this remark, which is as true as it ever was. The strange puzzle of it is that men, in their eagerness to live, should not be willing to let live; that because they have skill or cleverness or success, they should be disturbed because another has the same.

17. *Vanity, and a chase after wind;* because nothing comes of such rivalry, nothing satisfying or permanent. If a man by his envy gets an advantage over his fellow, and crushes him under by competition, he is after all only in the same old category of that "labor," successful or otherwise, which brings with it no surplusage. Thus Koheleth pronounces his verdict on the form of success that men think most of nowadays.

18. *Though the fool*, etc. The coherence of this with the

eth his flesh, yet the hollow of the palm full of restfulness is better than 20 the ideal of restful activity.

CHAP. IV. 6.

next clause is obscure, arising from the fact that Koheleth has here introduced two maxims from his collection, and, as is not unusual with him, has not made the joining seams tight between them and the rest of the thought and between the two. The idea to which he is evidently steering is the value of tranquillity or peace, the need that life should move normally. The thought of the previous verse has revealed an obstacle to this ideal, in the envies that attend man's best work. It is like sand and friction in the machinery, or, to use Koheleth's dialect, it throws the life back on the profitless ground of vanity. Peace, he would say, only a little peace, only a handful, were better than such a laboring and disturbed state. But the idea of such restfulness suggests the thought of its excess, or rather caricature, rest carried on to mere sloth and stagnation. This distortion of it must be guarded against. Hence the maxim about the fool. It is as if he had said, Rest may be abused, so as to become a disintegrator of life; and yet rest is good, much better than an activity which contains bitter envyings and which ends in a vain pursuit. Compare Matthew Arnold's lines in *Youth and Calm*: —

> "It hears a voice within it tell,
> Calm 's not life's crown, though calm is well."

Though stagnation is possible, restfulness, the majestic restfulness of a full tide of life, is still the ideal.

18. *Eateth his flesh*; that is, he falls away from mere disinclination to maintain himself; his spiritual substance used up in sloth as animals' fat wastes away in hibernation.

19. *The hollow of the palm*; this periphrasis, suggested by the derivation of the Hebrew word for "hand" here used

both fists full of labor and striving after wind.

3. The ultimate logic of such exclusive self-regard.

And turning yet again, I saw vanity under the sun. There is one, and there is no second; also son or brother hath he none; and there is no end to all his labor, nor yet are his eyes sat-

(*kaph*), is adopted as stronger antithesis to "both fists" (*hophnayim*) in the next clause.

20. *Restfulness;* not merely objective rest, but the inward capacity for rest; the ability to do tasks easily and joyfully would also be legitimately included under such state of soul, and was probably in the mind of Koheleth as part of the true ideal.

21. *Full of labor;* as this stands, it is a matter of course, a truism. By an anacoluthon Koheleth takes the final result as he sees it for the thing which to the man seems desirable; as if he had said, "better . . . than both fists full of [what will surely turn out to be] labor," etc.

23. *And turning yet again.* There is a kind of gradation in the three types of human evil specified in lines 1–31. First (1–13) the man of the upper hand in his cruelty to inferiors; then (14–22) the man of skill in his envy of equals; and here (23–31) the man of success who, having had his way with inferiors and rivals, stands alone. This last is thus the logic of the other two carried to its limit. Cruelty and envy tend to make men stand alone in the earth; cf. Isaiah v. 8. And the end of all this, as of the others, is vanity.

26. *No end to all his labor;* his activity has become a disease, like Koheleth's disease of research (Survey i. 5),

isfied with riches. "And for whom," saith he, "do I labor, and stint my soul of good?" This also is vanity, 30
yea, a sad travail this.

II

Better two than one; because they have a good recompense in their

Chap. iv. 8, 9.

insisting on continuance, though there is no goal or motive. That mysterious greatness of soul, too, has supervened; his eyes are not satisfied with riches, he is too large for accumulations to fill.

27. *Nor yet are his eyes satisfied;* this mystery of manhood has already been mentioned in the Proem, l. 18; and it will be taken up again for solution, in the Fourth Survey, ll. 1–33.

28. "*And for whom?*" — This is his moment of self-measurement; he has come to himself and inquires the meaning of it all, as Koheleth has done of himself; cf. Survey i. 82. This question of the survival of property has already troubled Koheleth; cf. Survey i. 96, 108.

31. *A sad travail;* the same sort of disease, or obsession, attacking the solitary rich man that has been ascribed by Koheleth to the "sons of men" in their craving for knowledge; see Survey i. 5, also note on l. 26, above.

32 sqq. With this section a number of things are given as better alternatives; as if Koheleth, looking over the affairs of a crooked world, could not give absolute ideals, but simply choice between things more or less evil. He seems to recognize instinctively, as a consequence of his realization of the limited legalistic or cosmic order, that an

Better alternatives dictated by good sense, as mitigation of various evils.

1. What is better in the every-day relations of men.

labor. For if they fall, the one lifteth
35 up his comrade; but woe to him, the
one, who falleth, when there is no sec-
ond to lift him up. Also if two lie
together, they have warmth; but how
can there be warmth for one alone?
40 And if a man overpower the one, two
shall stand against him; and the
*three*fold cord is not quickly broken.

CHAP. IV. 10–12.

optimistic outlook is hardly possible. For such the world must await the coming of that full-grown spiritual order which even Koheleth sees as little as do his contemporaries. But he can see the melioristic outlook; hence his view of better alternatives, partial compensations, in these coming lines 32–82, in view of the crooked world, and in the Fourth Survey, ll. 46–80, in view of the mystery that encompasses us round.

32. *Better two than one.* This paragraph is naturally suggested by the trend of all that has preceded in this Survey, which thus far has named the cruelties, the rivalries, the selfish isolation, that come from the antipathies of men. The logic of all this was segregation; man's hand against his brother man. And now the counsel of this paragraph, dictated by good sense if by no higher motive, reduces itself to this: it is better to pull together than to pull apart.

33. *A good recompense.* It is a very practical and not an altruistic motive that Koheleth urges; the help and warmth are what the man *gets*, not what he bestows, and his joy is in that.

42. *The* three*fold cord;* if two helping each other be a

Better is a child, poor and wise, than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to take admonition any more. For out of the house of bondsmen he hath gone forth to become king; nay, in his own realm he was born poor. I saw all the living

2. What is better in the leadership of state.

better alternative than one, then three pulling together is better still; a hint here toward the mutual helpfulness of a harmonious society. This idea, a commonplace now, had hardly struggled into men's wisest thoughts in Koheleth's time.

43. *Better is a child*, that is, on the throne. If Koheleth had in mind what he had actually seen, the king referred to is not clearly identifiable. Later also, and in less complimentary terms, a boy king is alluded to; see the Sixth Survey, ll. 76–80, and historical note there.

44. *Who knoweth not how*, etc. The point of this alternative seems to be: Better be *going up* from humility than be *going down* from wisdom. It is the direction that signifies, not the antecedent poverty and bonds, nor the antecedent wisdom. A king whose reign is on the increase in efficiency, not decadent, — this is the better lot in the leadership of state, as its like is the better everywhere.

46. *For out of the house of bondsmen;* the fact that he lifted himself up from such depth is evidence of his intrinsic energy and worth.

49. *I saw;* Koheleth speaks here as if he were making a transcript from his own observation. — *All the living;* a hyperbole, like our common expression, "all the world." The popularity is taken as corresponding in this case with

that walk under the sun on the side of this youth, the second, as he put himself in the old man's stead, — no end to all the people, to all over whom he was. And yet not even in him shall they that come after rejoice; for this likewise is vanity and a chase after wind.

3. What is better in the house of God.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; and draw nigh to

the better alternative; the people respond to the growing wisdom and energy of their youthful king.

54. *And yet not even in him;* all this is only relative, not absolute; however great his success, yet this kind of success belongs to the category of vain things; it is only a better alternative where all is transitory. The conclusion thus arrived at has already been broached, Proem, 27–31.

59. *The house of God;* the Temple, which in the time when the book was written had become the capitol of the Jewish life, religious and national. The few words used to describe it here recognize it as a place of sacrifice, and probably of song and liturgy, as the virtue inculcated regarding the service is "drawing nigh to hear." It seems to have been treated as a place where perfunctory attendance, without participation, had become prevalent; and such treatment would naturally be given, on the part of the worldly, to the prescribed and familiar ceremonials of a state church. The counsel of this passage is addressed to those who go to church because it is the fashion, and to whom it is a form.

hear rather than to offer the fools' [60]
sacrifice; for unwittingly they do evil.
Be not rash with thy mouth, and let
not thy heart hasten to utter a word

CHAP. V. 1, 2.

60. *Rather than;* it is these words that indicate the better alternative with which this paragraph deals; another way of saying it is better, or wiser, to do this than to do that. — *The fools' sacrifice;* this expression sounds like a contemptuous coinage of Koheleth's. What this "fools' sacrifice" is, we can gather from the context. Its antithesis and corrective is "drawing nigh to hear;" and the counsel about it leads Koheleth to speak of the value of silence and reverence. What he refers to, then, would seem to be the heedless and unseemly chatter of fools in places where above all else they should listen; they rush in, as a modern maxim puts it, where angels fear to tread. So the sacrifice they give is talk.

61. *Unwittingly they do evil;* literally, "they are not knowing to do evil." To themselves it certainly is an evil, and an affront to the principle and spirit of the service.

62. *Let not thy heart hasten to utter;* this admonition, coming from a time pervaded by an atmosphere of religious legalism, shares with its age in thinking of God as remote and austere, and of his worship as largely a matter for priests and choristers. The ideal religious attitude whose heart-cry is Abba, Father (Romans viii. 15), is yet far in the future; but as between reverent awe on the one side and empty volubility on the other, the better alternative cannot be doubtful. It reduces itself to an issue not of the voice but of the heart; we may express it: Better in silence be open to holy influences of the house of God

before God; for God is in heaven,
and thou upon the earth; therefore
be thy words few. For as cometh
the dream in the multitude of care, so the
voice of a fool in the multitude of
words.
When thou vowest a vow to God,

than in the din of words be impervious to them. It is thus a plea to give the susceptible receptive centre of the nature a chance; and thereby to utilize the good for which forms of worship are instituted.

66. *Be thy words few;* in this injunction Koheleth touches upon his sense of the deep values of silence. It is the spiritual attitude that he would set over against the wordy and vapid tendencies of his age, the encounter with which, from now onward, is a prominent animus of his thought. He seems to think that the flood of words, apparent even in the "fools' sacrifice" of the Temple, is in danger of swamping all spiritual stamina and character; hence his caveat against it. — *For as cometh*, etc.; a maxim adduced from Koheleth's store to clinch his thought. Its force here is, that a fool's voice, with its multitude of words, produces the same effect on the age's findings of wisdom that a dream, as a grotesque and unreal projection of business cares, does on the solid ideas of life. That he had a very concrete characteristic of his age in mind, that it was all to him like a dreamy confusion, would seem to be indicated in the counsel with which he closes these alternatives, ll. 80–82, below.

70. *When thou vowest a vow;* the description of vows here sounds as if the making of vows, like worship, had become a perfunctory and conventional service, undertaken, per-

delay not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools. What thou vowest, pay. Better that thou vow not, than that thou vow and pay not. Let not thy mouth cause thy flesh to sin; and say not before the messenger it was

4. What is better in the plighted word of man.

CHAP. V. 4–6.

haps, for the religious repute that inhered in it, and so a kind of pious fashion. If, then, one could get the repute without the expense, it would be a shrewd piece of business. In a state religion of priestly functions, too, vows, the one free-will observance, would for the laity be a convenient gauge of a man's sanctity. The text invades the custom from the business and practical point of view, the point of honesty.

73. *Better that thou vow not.* If the above-given view of vows be correct, the better alternative involved here is: Better forgo the religious repute than vitiate your word. It thus compels religion to keep inseparable company with morality. "Man's word," as King Arthur says, "is God in man;" more precious, therefore, than all shows of religion. The temple of the heart is first of all a temple of truth.

74. *Let not thy mouth,* etc.; as it would if betrayed into a promise which the man could not or would not fulfill.

76. *Before the messenger;* the same word elsewhere rendered *angel.* It seems more natural, in the business tone of this passage, to regard it as denoting a temple messenger whose business it was to do the book-keeping and collect the dues. Such an official would be necessary where vows were a matter of fashion, as they would in their nature be a matter of notoriety and record. In all this the same spirit is

an error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?

80 Though in a multitude of dreams and vanities and words many, yet fear thou God.

recognized that we hear Jesus afterward reproaching when He denounces the plea of Corban; see Mark vii. 11.

77. *Wherefore should God be angry;* Koheleth gets at the religion through the voice (cf. Romans x. 9), as it makes insincere promises; so this is another way of being a fool through words. Multitude of words in the Temple, falsity of words in promises made to God; an outrage to the divine in both cases.

78. *And destroy;* this is not a threat; it simply contemplates the issue of destruction, according to the Wisdom tenet, by the fact of identifying the false promiser with fools; cf. l. 71.

80. This sentence may be regarded as the summing up of the section here ending. The better alternative in all these cases reduces to the fear of God. The "dreams" recalls the maxim, l. 66; the "vanities," l. 56, and the general drift of the thought; the "words many," l. 60, and the general sentiment against the multiplication of words. The sentence is a stroke of generalizing imagination. Koheleth feels the crookedness of the world about him as a bad dream, wherein empty words and empty energies jostle in a meaningless din; and the one clear note that sounds out as truth and sanity is, Fear God. See note on l. 66; and for the subject of the "words many," see Introductory Study, p. 43.

III

Offsets to the findings of the Survey:

If in the province thou see oppression of the poor, and wresting of judgment and right, marvel not at the matter; for high watcheth over high, and there are higher over them.

in the machinery of the state;

Chap. v. 8.

83–116. This section seems to recur in a broad way to the survey of things in section i. (ll. 1–31), which there only mentioned the discounts of life as facts, and drew no offset or conclusion. There are offsets, however, which, in the face of persecutions and rivalries and purse-pride, make life livable; just as there are grievous discounts to the bad eminence attained by heartless worldliness. To point these out is Koheleth's way of preparing for the triumphant conclusion of the present Survey, ll. 117–129.

83. *If in the province;* Palestine, it will be remembered, is an outlying province, which gets its government at second hand from a distant Persian or Grecian ruler, and which therefore is subject to the corruptions and evils of such government. These evils are taken as a matter of course; the world had never conceived anything better. Koheleth writes too, it would seem, when the nation, in a kind of apathy, is becoming more Hellenized and tolerant of the order of things.

86. *High watcheth over high;* this seems to describe the graded orders of officialdom, seen especially in the system of tax-farming, wherein the official nearest the court, obtaining the post of collector, lets and sublets to successive collectors and publicans, and each of these in turn, striving

Nevertheless the profit of a land is for all; the king himself is subservient to
90 the field.

in the cares of wealth;

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth

to make his office as remunerative as possible, makes the margin between his obligations and his receipts as great as possible; and so in this system of "high watcheth over high," the grinding-point, worse as the gradation is longer, comes at last upon the poor. Cf. Expositor's Bible, *Proverbs*, p. 294, footnote 2. The undermost man must pay the reckoning, must suffer the oppression and injustice, with most severity and least redress; that is inevitable in such a line of middlemen.

88. *Nevertheless;* this draws the solid offset of reality, points to the genuine truth which confronts the crooked shows of things. The real sinews of state and society are after all the workers, the laborers in the field, the downtrodden ones; they create the profit in which they ought to share. Koheleth thus shows where his sympathies are; yet he puts his wisdom in such a way as to minister not so much to the embittering sense of wrong as to contentment, and to the pride of being a solid intrinsic man. This last sentence is doubtless a maxim from his collection.

91. *He that loveth silver.* In this paragraph Koheleth seems to be thinking again of that strife for wealth which engenders rivalries and friction and yields no rest of soul, ll. 14–22. After all the envyings and competitions by which men get the upper hand and the profit, yet the profit does not satisfy; it is not an inner thing, like wisdom and knowledge and joy. This is the bad offset of the situation, the

abundance, with income. This also is vanity. With increase of goods increase also their consumers; and what avail to their owners save the seeing of the eyes? Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eat little or much; but the surfeit of the rich man doth not suffer him to sleep.

There is a sore evil I have seen

CHAP. V. 10–13.

discount that must be subtracted from all accumulations of external wealth. — This lack of satisfaction in riches is touched upon here, and taken up for enlarged treatment in the Fourth Survey, ll. 1–45.

95. *What avail?* To increase wealth is simply to increase the scale of living, so that the proportion between resources and wants remains much the same as before. A limited amount suffices to keep life and comfort; the rest is dead weight, or merely something to look at.

97. *Sweet is the sleep*, etc. And now for the offset on the laborer's side, the compensation which in spite of hardship and poverty he has. The advantage here drawn is similar to that in praise of rest, l. 19, but attributed to the laborer, who is not filled with the anxieties of business. The real comfort of life is after all with him who, in tranquillity of soul and joy of ability, is bringing something useful to pass, rather than with the rich whose wants are all supplied.

101–116. This paragraph portrays the offset to the supremacy of gain, when this has reached its limit and balanced its account. In ll. 23–31, the solitariness of such supremacy

in the channels of gain.

under the sun: riches kept for the owners to their hurt. And those riches perished by luckless adventure; and he begat a son, and there was nothing in his hand. As he came forth from his mother's womb, so shall he return, naked, to go as he came; and nothing shall he receive in his toil, which he may carry away in his hand. And truly, this is a sore evil, that alto-

CHAP. V. 13–16.

is described; here the chances of losing all in the process of getting, and the leanness of soul when all is obtained. The riches gone, all is gone; there is neither endowment for the son, nor any spiritual residuum to enrich his latter end.

103. *To their hurt;* Koheleth is not inveighing against riches *per se*, but against riches so gained and used as to injure the soul.

107. *So shall he return, naked;* said not of every man, but of the rich man; with the strong implication left that the soul *ought not* to return naked. His unspoken feeling is that some use should lie

> "in blood and breath,
> Which else were fruitless of their due."

110. *And truly, this is a sore evil;* it will be noted that the offset, or vanity, to place over against these phases of wealth and gain is the fact, not that they are evil but that they are external, not intrinsic to the soul. And this may be regarded as the great fallacy of things under the sun. Enter the life of society and business where we will, and it reduces itself

gether as he came so must he go, —
and what profit to him that he toileth
for the wind? All his days he eateth
in darkness, and is troubled much, 115
and sickness is his, and vexation.

CHAP. v. 16, 17.

eventually to an exterior thing; the wealth of goods or of power is not a wealth of soul. Such a soul must return to earth naked as it came, if all its riches are riches of the hand. This fact may be an evil, or not; it depends on how the soul looks upon it. It is the kind of fact that shallow men would remedy by imagining an immortality wherein somehow relations will be reversed. Koheleth, however, is not thinking of what the soul is some time to be, but of what it is now, — of its intrinsic greatness or smallness, wealth or poverty. And the smallness, the vanity, which he unearths in all these courses of a crooked world is essentially a smallness of soul. There he leaves it. He does not propose a remedy beyond death; he does not see such a remedy; and we may agree with him in concluding that none such is to be reckoned on. The soul must find its compensation, its *yithrōn*, apart from time and environment; and it is such a compensation as this, an inner wealth and character, that he is steering for.

114. *He eateth in darkness;* not that the troubles of the rich man are greater than those of the common lot; but it is unrelieved, it has nothing to compensate for all the outlay of care and uncertainty, nor can all his wealth purchase immunity. This is the bad offset of the situation, as applied to him whose trust is in riches.

IV

The solution: the good and comely life of joy in work and in the portion which God hath given.

BEHOLD, what I have seen! good that is comely: to eat and to drink and to see good in all his labor which he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him; for this is his portion, yea, every man to whom God hath given riches and

CHAP. V. 18, 19.

117–129. This short section not only gives the good offset to the evils of the preceding paragraph, but lays down the grand solution of the whole Survey. It is introduced emotionally, as if it had come to the writer as a discovery flashing suddenly forth from the turbid welter in which his observations have been moving. And the "good that is comely" is not confined to the common laborer, as in the last named offset, l. 98, though it is open to him first of all as the man in the normal use of life; it may also be the lot of him "to whom God hath given riches and goods," l. 123. As to substance, it merely takes up and amplifies, with a peculiar zest and fondness, what has already been broached as the solution of the Surveys hitherto; cf. Survey i. 118–121; ii. 30–35, 67–71; and see note, Survey i. 118.

120. *All the days of his life;* the permanent good which Koheleth began to seek in wine and folly (Survey i. 30) he has found in the joy that man has in labor; and he will enlarge upon the sufficingness of this later, see Survey v. 140–155.

122. *This is his portion;* see note on Survey i. 61.

goods, and hath enabled him to eat
thereof, and to obtain his portion, and
to rejoice in his labor, — THIS is the
gift of God. For he will not much
remember the days of his life, when
God respondeth to him in joy of heart.

CHAP. V. 19, 20.

124. *And hath enabled him to eat thereof;* in the next Survey (l. 7 sq.) Koheleth takes up the case of the man with "riches, and stores, and honor," whom God has *not* enabled to eat thereof, and makes it the starting-point of the Survey.

127. *For he will not much remember;* with this sentence Koheleth casts a glance back over the Survey, with its view of oppressions and rivalries and follies and baffllements; and the grand offset that he brings against them is, — that the soul, when God's joy is consciously in it, can forget them all. It has risen as superior to them as if it were already in heaven; the crooked is made straight within.

THE FOURTH SURVEY

FATE, AND THE INTRINSIC MAN

Concrete case occasioning the Survey: possessions, and no power to use them.

THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and great it is upon men: a man to whom God hath given riches, and stores, and honor, and nought is lacking to his

CHAP. VI. 1, 2.

The example with which this Survey opens, suggested perhaps as a contrast to the ideal of the previous Survey, l. 124, is a case similar to the one given in Survey iii. 101–116; only there the point was derived from the uncertainties and miscalculations of business, and the evil was in the world of environment; while here the defect is in the soul, which when all is gained fails to rest in it. And this guides to the trend of the present Survey. The Survey is the expansion of the assertion made in the Proem, l. 18, and illustrated concretely by the experience of Koheleth as a king, Survey i. 63 sqq. There is a quality in the soul which makes it too large for its dwelling-place; it so transcends its environment that when this is ideally favorable, it is yet a misfit. Doubtless this is another aspect of eternity in the heart (Survey ii. 27). It is something, at least, to which the soul is inevitably fated; and in view of Koheleth's agnosticism regarding the hereafter, a very deep and poignant, a very baffling thing. Man's fate is to find all the objects of his striving vanity.

soul of all that he desireth; and yet God doth not enable him to eat thereof, for a stranger eateth it. This is vanity, and a sore disease this.

I

If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that many be the days of his years, and

10 **Evil of missing the good of life.**

CHAP. VI. 2, 3.

LINE 6. *And yet God doth not enable him to eat thereof.* To eat of a thing is the Hebrew symbol of satisfaction with it; it thereby becomes virtually a part of the man. See note, Survey i. 118. Not to be able to eat does not refer to being incapacitated by illness; it means that these things are not soul-food, do not nourish the real man.

8. *A stranger eateth it;* one who has had nothing to do with getting it. It is as fitted to an alien as to him whose life was bound up with it. The passage is the Hebrew enunciation of the classical *sic vos non vobis.*

9. *A sore disease;* all the places where Koheleth calls a thing a malady of humanity (Survey i. 5; iii. 31; and here) refer to a mysterious surge of manhood, pressing him as it were to something which the needs of the present conception of manhood are too narrow to motive; it seems to refer to some standard of life unknown. See notes, i. 5; iii. 31.

10. *If a man,* etc. Here are mentioned the typical Old Testament blessings of life, — many children, long life, things which, in the absence of the motive of immortality, were accounted the supreme good.

12. *And his soul be not satisfied;* the point of the asser-

his soul be not satisfied with good, — nay, even though no tomb were his to dread, — I say, better than he were an untimely birth. For in vanity it came, and in darkness it goeth, and with darkness is its name covered over. The sun also hath it not seen, nor hath it known aught. There is rest for this, more than for the other.

CHAP. VI. 3–5.

tion is thus centred in the soul. Any possession which does not go to its enrichment is mere vanity ; and a life without ultimate peace of soul, a life with a never attained goal, is worse than no life at all. Koheleth lays out all his strength in maintaining this.

14. *Nay, even though*, etc., literally, "and even a tomb be not his." This seems not to refer to the calamity of dying without regular burial, such as was so deprecated by the ancients, for that sense would take away from the climax which גַּם (*even*) evidently aims to cap; it refers rather to the supposition that no death at all came in to interrupt this prosperity, or to be in chilling prospect as a discount from the man's felicity. Even a prospect of unending existence would but aggravate the case to the soul that has no inner satisfaction.

21. *Rest for this ;* the rest of vacuity if not of fulfilled desire. Job longs for the same rest of not having been at all ; Job iii. 16. Koheleth dwells, however, on that negation of being with even more poetic zest than does Job ; the fervor of his contrast thus intensifying his por-

And though one live a thousand
years twice told, and see not good, —
are not all going to one place? 25

trayal of the utmost significance of being "satisfied with good."

23. *And though*, etc. Koheleth has supposed a life from which the dread of death is removed (l. 14); now he returns to the thought of the end which must eventually come, however late, to put an end to the life which has not seen good.

25. *Are not all going to one place?* — as much as to imply, if you do not get satisfaction here on earth, and in the life which is your portion now, where else can you look for it? The place that men reckon on hereafter has no power to give satisfaction. If the present environment will not give it, we have no more certain data for an environment that will. The "one place" that Koheleth has in mind is the one place of Survey ii. 61, in which, so far as appears, not only wicked and good, wise and foolish, but even man and beast, are brought to an absolute equality of doom. He brings up the thought of it here, however, not to centre attention on the blankness of the hereafter, but to keep men from missing the good of life now; he is thus using his agnosticism as a healthy motive and incentive to noble living. It is like Omar Khayyám's plea (Rubáiyát, lxiii.), —

> "Oh threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
> One thing at least is certain — *This* Life flies;
> One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
> The Flower that once has blown for ever dies."

It is something, it is much, in the presence of those who, as seems to him, are feeding fancy and starving energy on

The hunger for what is more than meat.

All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet also is the soul not filled. For what advantage hath the sage over the fool? what the poor who

speculative philosophizings (cf. Survey ii. 58, 63, and notes), to emphasize so sturdily the idea that satisfaction is *not* to be had in postponing the good of life to a somewhere and somewhen beyond.

26. *For his mouth;* this is Koheleth's pregnant way of stating the phenomenon which, perhaps more than all else, occasioned the writing of his book, prompting his initial question, Proem, l. 3, "What profit hath man in all his labor?" At first sight it seems to fill the world full: work on the one side, wage (which reduces itself to food) on the other, a kind of completed circuit, the second half just answering to the first, and no apparent surplusage. It is the significance of life, so far as the body is concerned.

27. *The soul not filled;* in these words is expressed that mighty irony of fate of which Koheleth would have man take advantage. To say the soul cannot be filled with eating is as much as to say the animal life, the life of the senses, is not its true life. But more than this. There is a soul-hunger so much greater that even the difference of sage and fool, poor and obese rich, does not count in relation; much as the distinction between palace and cottage does not count as viewed from the mountain-tops. Thus we are brought face to face with the mysterious greatness of the manhood soul; man is fated, we may say, to be greater than the utmost measurements of a mere earthly state can compass.

29. *What the poor who knoweth;* in Koheleth's view it is

knoweth how to walk before the liv- 30
ing? Better is the sight of the eyes
than wandering of soul. This also is
vanity, and a chase after wind.

evidently the poor, or perhaps we may say those who must earn their living, who are in best position to see life in its true proportions and live it honorably. This is of a piece with his regarding the laboring man as the most comfortably situated, Survey iii. 97, and as the real strength of the body politic, *ib.* 88.

31. *Better is the sight of the eyes;* with this maxim, either from his collection or, as seems to me not unlikely, composed for the present occasion, Koheleth sums up his thought, bringing it to the focus that he has had in mind all along, namely, of the intrinsic soul. In Survey iii. 96 "the seeing of the eyes" is regarded as a very insignificant thing, considered as the residuum which increase of riches can yield; still, small as it is, it furnishes a centre of concrete fact, of solid reality. The "wandering of soul," which Koheleth sets over against this as inferior, seems to refer to vague speculation, some fanciful fad which in his view tends to drift men away from their moorings. He writes as if his age were deeply infected with something like this. To him, on the contrary, the intrinsic soul, or as we should say, a formed and centred character, is the all-important thing; not to have this is to be in the company of those vain souls who chase after wind. It is as if he said, Have a soul centred and at home, even though it have only concrete fact on which to feed; do not wander off from the verifiable sphere of the senses and the reason. This is the true scientific attitude, as we have described in the Introductory Study, pp. 9–11.

The measure that fate has taken.

That which is, long ago was its
35 name called, and it was known that
man is man; nor can he contend with
Him that is mightier than he. For
that there are words many, multiply-

CHAP. VI. 10, 11.

34. *Long ago was its name called;* this takes up a new aspect of that to which man is fated; we may entitle it the measure which fate has taken of the world and of man. "That which is" includes both; it is cosmic. The name, in Hebrew thinking, is what describes the thing; to call the name is to designate its fixed and intrinsic nature. Everything must move in the lines long appointed to it; man with the rest.

35. *That man is man;* the word used for man is Adam, the name that connotes his earthly origin and his earthly limitation. That is the name by which he was long ago called.

36. *Nor can he contend;* to contend with Him that is mightier than he would be equivalent to seeking a change of state or principle of living; like beating against the bars of a cage. Koheleth feels the limitation, the imprisonment; but it is characteristic of his philosophy to say, There it is, unchangeable; make the best of it. — This same thought of contending with God has been worked out in the Book of Job; see Job ix. 3; xl. 2.

38. *Words many, multiplying vanity;* from the thought of this fixedness of man's intrinsic state Koheleth's mind recurs to the "dreams and vanities and words many" of Survey iii. 80; see note there. The implication would seem to be that this wordiness of his age has tendency to produce wandering of soul; loosening men's hold, so to say, on the

ing vanity, — what profit therefore to
man? For who knoweth what is good 40
for man in life, all the days of his
vain life which he spendeth like a
shadow? For who shall report to man

CHAP. VI. 11, 12.

demands of their intrinsic self, while the soul is launched out into oceans of vague and vain speculation. In his view nothing can come of it, — no profit, no fixed and verifiable result. That this refers to prevalent vaticinations about the hereafter, in other words to prevailing discussions on immortality, seems evident from the question asked in l. 43. It is notable that in Survey vi. 69 the same conjunction of voluble words with the question of the hereafter is made; see Introductory Study, pp. 43 sqq.

40. *What is good for man in life;* the life here and the life beyond are not dissociated; to solve one is to solve the other. It is as if he had said, The problem of the present life, vain and shadowy as it is, is baffling enough, without meddling with a future existence. Find what is good for man here, and you have the only sure data for there; and until you find this life, the other must remain dark.

42. *Like a shadow;* Koheleth is fighting against pursuing future shadows; and here his motive, which constitutes the deep pathos of his book, comes to light. His agnosticism of the future is equally an agnosticism of the present, as comes out l. 40. The present life itself is a shadow; Koheleth has not reached the solid landing-place of life from which to construct his horoscope of things future; he is sadly aware that neither life nor immortality has come to light.

what shall be after him under the
45 sun?

II

Better is a good name than goodly

Chap. vi. 12.–vii. 1.

44. *Under the sun;* here, again, the life on earth and the life in some region beyond are not dissociated. To know the future of one is as hard as to know the future of the other. Wherever he speaks of the hereafter, it is so; he recognizes no discontinuity at death; compare Survey ii. 71; v. 53; vi. 70. What he is concerned with is the life intrinsic and permanent; compare Survey i. 34, and note there. The sturdy implication he would leave, therefore, is that the wise attitude toward the unknown future is to be ready for it and meet it as it comes. "He who would be a great soul in future must be a great soul now," Emerson says.

46–80. With this connotation in mind, as it would seem, Koheleth sets himself in the coming section to draw a series of better alternatives in the interests of soul-building; each, as will be observed, centring in some element whereby the soul is strengthened or beautified. That these alternatives give the melioristic, not the optimistic, outlook comports with what Koheleth has just said about the shadowed outlook in life; it is only a relative better, not an absolute best, that he can see; compare note, Survey iii. 32 sqq. But all is given in the intuitive sense that the strong and wise soul is in the best condition to meet its fate, whatever this may be; the way from shadows to light lies in that direction. "Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul."

46. *A good name;* perhaps the first of these alternatives, which are given in maxim form, takes its suggestion from

nard; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Better alternatives that make for soul-building.

Better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; be- 50

CHAP. VII. 1, 2.

l. 35 above; as much as to say, the name stamped upon the man long ago, as indicative of his intrinsic nature, is more than the superficial repute, however fair. In the original the adjective *good* is omitted. — *Than goodly nard;* in this translation an attempt is made to preserve a little of the word-play of the original, — *shēm* and *shēmen*.

47. The day of death is regarded as superior to the day of birth, not because it is the end of life, but because it is the wisest and ripest time of life, the culmination of the growth for which life is given. The assertion is in the same sentiment as Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra:* —

> "Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made."

50. *Than . . . the house of feasting;* Koheleth, to whom has been attributed a strain of Epicureanism, is as unfriendly to idle feasting (compare l. 56 below, and Survey vi. 77–79) as he is friendly to eating and drinking (Survey i. 119; ii. 33; iii. 118; v. 92, 140). Nor are the two at all inconsistent with each other. He praises eating and drinking as they connote man's joy in his work and his God-given portion; and at the same time he depreciates feasting as an expression of empty-headed mirth and folly. The fact that his antipathy to fools is roused alike by wordy discussions and by feasting suggests that the idle speculations which so irritate him have become a fad of the wealthier and aristocratic though less thoughtful classes. One is inclined also to

cause that is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.

Better is sorrow than laughter; for
by sadness of face the heart is made
55 fair. The heart of the wise is in the
house of mourning; but the heart of
fools in the house of merriment.

Chap. vii. 2–4.

think that the sunny gayety of the Greek mind and sentiment which is leavening the age is what moves Koheleth to set up the praise of austerity here as a counterweight; it is in his view a time when the more solemn elements of life should have their due.

51. *The end of all mankind;* a parallel to the day of death in l. 47; the end when the award of life is made up. Thus, contrary to the house of revelry, the house of mourning furnished an element of soul-building, the living lay it to heart.

53. *Than laughter;* Koheleth is evidently so irritated by the lightness of life around him that he is suspicious even of laughter, as if it must necessarily be the accompaniment of an empty head; compare l. 60, below. He is revealing his old fogy mood, much as he did in Survey iii. 58–82.

54. *The heart is made fair;* this is the point with Koheleth; it is the better furnishing of heart and character, the cultivation of manhood.

55. *Of the wise . . . of fools;* thus he has converged his precepts to his favorite topic of fools; and one recognizes herein the same class of men who earlier have brought their ill-timed garrulity and levity into the house of God; Survey iii. 58.

Better to hear a wise man's rebuke
than for one to hear the song of fools.
For as the crackling of thorns under
the pot, so is the laughter of a fool.
This also is a vanity: that extor-
tion besotteth a wise man; and the
heart is corrupted by a bribe.
Better is the issue of a matter than
its beginning.

CHAP. VII. 5–8.

60. *For as the crackling of thorns;* there is a word-play between the word for "thorns" (*sirim*) and the word for "pot" (*sir*); which, however, cannot well be reproduced in English; nor is there call for elaborateness of wording, as the simile makes its way by its own felicity.

62. *This also is a vanity;* it seems better to connect this clause with the succeeding than, as is ordinarily done, with the maxim before. The saying, probably inserted from Koheleth's collection, is not, like the others, in the form of an alternative; but it demonstrates its fitness here because Koheleth, occupied with what makes for soul-culture, is correspondingly sensitive to what makes against or impairs it. And both extortion and bribe-taking he views as each in its way invading the integrity of the soul; the one by besotting, that is, making silly or foolish, the wise; the other by disintegrating, crumbling, the true manhood of the heart.

65. *Better is the issue;* this gives in general terms the same truth that is in Koheleth's mind in praising the day of death (l. 47) and the house of mourning as the end of all mankind (l. 49). Although man cannot see to the end

Better is the patient of spirit than
the haughty of spirit. Haste not in
thy spirit to be angry; for anger
70 resteth in the bosom of fools.

Say not, "How was it that the
former days were better than these?"
for not out of wisdom dost thou ask
concerning this.

75 Good is wisdom, as good as an in-

(Survey ii. 30), yet wisdom dictates making up our plans with reference to their outcome and permanence.

67. *The patient of spirit;* this we may regard as the ground virtue of the book, the calm self-control and wisdom of endurance which Koheleth would set over against the labor, the oppressions, the untowardness, the mysteries, of his world. It is the comprehensive better alternative. Its opposite, anger, has already been stigmatized by Eliphaz as the ruin of the foolish man; see Job v. 2.

71. *Say not*, etc. The thought of the *laudatores temporis acti* here seems to have been suggested by the "anger" of the preceding maxim, which in Koheleth's depressed and spiritless age may have taken the shape of inciting men to emulation of the more heroic times of old. The form of the question, "How was it?" takes the main thing, that the former times *were* better, for granted; and it is this main thing that Koheleth would by implication call into question; that is not settled yet. If anger in general is a foolish trait, that form of anger which would indict a whole age is not of wisdom.

75. *Good is wisdom;* the last in this series of better alter-

heritance, and a profit to them that see the sun. For the refuge of wisdom is as the refuge of money; but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom quickeneth its possessor. 80

III

CONTEMPLATE the work of God;

CHAP. VII. 11–13.

natives, and perhaps intended as the best. The alternative comes out by first naming wherein wisdom and money are alike a refuge (literally *a shade*), and then naming the point wherein wisdom is superior. Wisdom is an inner thing; it strikes into the life, it vitalizes; this cannot be said of money.

79. *The advantage;* the often-used word *yithrōn*, profit, surplusage. Here, then, is another detail in answer to the initial question, "What profit?" It is natural to associate profit with wages, reward, money; Koheleth is seeking the profit which is real, as being an element of life, and in wisdom he finds an element of soul-building. — *Of knowledge;* in using the two nearly synonymous words *knowledge* and *wisdom*, Koheleth seems to have in mind, so to say, the static and dynamic aspects of one endowment. Knowledge, as a possession, parallels with money; as an applied thing, working to quicken, it is wisdom.

> "A higher hand must make her mild,
> If all be not in vain; and guide
> Her footsteps, moving side by side
> With wisdom, like the younger child."

81–102. In this concluding section Koheleth deduces the solution for a soul confronting the fated mysteries of life

The solution: balanced sanity of mind, in utrumque paratus.

for who can straighten what he hath
made crooked? In the day of good
be in good heart; and in the evil
85 day consider: — this also hath God
made, over against that, to the end

and concerned both to build itself up in vital wisdom and to maintain its integrity. Its resource is, so far as it can, to discount the case in its observed mystery and preserve a balance and sanity such as is expressed in the phrase *in utrumque paratus*. With a soul seeking the best elements of upbuilding, this is the one wise attitude.

81. *Contemplate the work of God;* for the purpose of propounding the soul's attitude, Koheleth recurs to what has already been said about the work of God, Survey ii. 35–39, and about the crooked and the straight, Survey i. 10–12. The implication is that life is to be made livable not by changing what is without — an impossible thing — but by adjusting what is within the soul to it.

84. *Be in good heart*, that is, in good courage or cheer; literally, "In the day of good be in good," a play on the word *good*. For the manhood soul Koheleth advocates first of all confidence in the world order, spontaneous committal to things as they are.

85. *This also hath God made;* nor does this confidence ignore the evils of life; it accepts them as the work of the same God, to be reckoned with as part of the life's assets.

86. *To the end that*, etc. Further still, it discerns a purpose in this very mystery of good and evil; in Koheleth's view it is positively *better* that man should not know the future, or mete the bounds of good and evil in God's deal-

that man should not find out anything
after him.

All this have I seen in the days of

ings. It is not intended, it would not be best, that man should spend this existence in dodging or manipulating a calculable hereafter. So to do would lead to discounting the approaching evil, or banking on the approaching good, and thus living a life of opportunism and expediency. From such commercial ideal Koheleth would throw man back on his intrinsic soul, which he is to enlarge and enrich without reference to the future, building character here and now. This is doubtless the practical working of that strain of "eternity in the heart" which exists, though without vaticination of the beginning and the end of things ; see Survey ii. 26. Koheleth has already traced educational purposes in God's mysterious ways ; his eternal work being designed to produce reverence, Survey ii. 39 ; and the veiling of judgment being designed to throw man back on the animal environment in which his life's problem is to be worked out, Survey ii. 52.

89. *In the days of my vanity ;* a variation of phrase intimating that what follows belongs to the same category of vanities that he is concerned to enumerate. The observation about righteous and wicked, which is repeated, Survey v. 84, is a traverse of the old wisdom philosophy which has already been made by Job ; see Job xxi. 7 ; xxiv. 22, 23 ; see also Psalm lxxiii. 3. It may be taken here, then, as an acknowledged truth, not needing argument. To bring it up here amounts to saying that on mere legalistic lines, on systems of justice, or of rewards and penalties, we cannot interpret the world, we cannot run the life of man into such a rigid and calculable mould. If we survive or if we per-

90 my vanity: there is a righteous man who perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who surviveth in his wickedness. Be not too righteous, and play not the sage to

ish, then, it must be on some principle not yet apparent. Thus, albeit negatively and dimly, Koheleth is reaching out after a broader and freer interpretation of life than his Mosaic era offers.

93–98. The way these precepts connect with the preceding seems to be by the implication that a decrepit law which has lost the power to execute itself may be treated with freedom, used with a discrimination and mastery which evince that it was made for the manhood soul, not the soul for it. The soul in its wisdom is to judge what is "too righteous" and "too wicked;" its wisdom is to have the casting vote.

93. *Be not too righteous;* if this is to be interpreted as parallel to the next precept, which has a reflexive sense ("make not thyself wise"), it would seem to refer to a similar making one's self righteous, that is, to a *put-on* righteousness, or perhaps to a righteousness tending to the formal and mechanical, as among the Pharisees of a later time. One is inclined to think Koheleth is warning against the ways of the Hasidim, or pious ones, of his time, whose zeal for the law, in this "night of legalism," may well have assumed this appearance. To a man not tuned to the pious key, like Koheleth, the sanctimonious and hypocritical tendency of such rigid legalism must have been repellant.

94. *Play not the sage;* in this phrasing an attempt is made to reproduce the reflexive sense; see preceding note. A righteousness or a wisdom that is put on, like a piece of

excess; wherefore wilt thou undo 95
thyself? Be not too wicked either,
and be not a fool; wherefore wilt thou
die before thy time?

CHAP. VII. 16, 17.

stage-acting, is not the spontaneous expression of the individual self.

95. *Undo thyself*, that is, destroy the free play of the genuine self, as well as the power of the virtue itself, by making it forced and artificial.

96. *Be not too wicked;* as much as to say, if you are not to be too righteous, do not cast the bridle wholly away and run into excess on the other side. Would this leave the implication open that one may be moderately wicked, if one tempers it by wisdom? It is precarious, perhaps, to conclude so; but so much, at least, we may credit to Koheleth's thought: — Let the law of your being be so in you, and rest upon you so easily, that your spirit may be free to use it, and not merely be used or enslaved by it. Venture on life, whether toward righteousness or wickedness, in masterfulness of wisdom. The accomplished musician knows what discords he may make, and he can venture on things that a pedant would condemn. "We find in military matters an Oliver Cromwell who will make every mistake known to strategy and yet win all his battles." Some such attitude as this, I think, Koheleth would have men maintain toward the laws of life; be so master of them and of themselves that obedience is freedom and joy. This is a hint of that spiritual liberty which in a later era could say, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any;" 1 Corinthians vi. 12.

97. *Be not a fool;* this precept connects closely with the

It is good that thou lay hold on
100 this, and from that, too, refrain not
thy hand, for he that feareth God
shall come forth of them all.

CHAP. VII. 18.

one before; as much as to say, If you are going to take liberty with the law, do not make a fool affair of it. Do not wallow, as it were, in wickedness, as if it were your nature ; subject your dealings with it to wisdom. Koheleth has already shown what it is to obey this precept, when, in laying hold on pleasure and folly, Survey i. 32, his heart was all the while "guiding by wisdom;" and when, in all his audacious dealings with worldliness, i. 56, his "wisdom stood by" him.

98. *Die before thy time ;* Koheleth is thinking not only of those brutish and stupid kinds of wickedness which invade the body and shorten life, but of that fatuous baseness which kills the soul and makes "in more of life true life no more."

99. *On this . . . from that ;* this can only mean, be free in spirit to test life on all sides ; live life with eyes open and heart unfettered.

101. *He that feareth God ;* a strong enough safeguard to offset all these daring precepts. The fear of God, as an inner prophylactic, makes man as it were immune before all the uncertainties of the world and fate, and among all the pitfalls of law. The fear of God is Koheleth's universal solvent. It is man's saving attitude in the presence of God's overwhelming work, Survey ii. 39 ; it is his substantial support in the presence of the world's dreams and wordy vanities, iii. 81 ; it is his guarantee of good to offset the

rampant presumption of the wicked, v. 77 ; it is the end of the matter when all is heard, Epilogue, 19.

"*In utrumque paratus*, then. Be ready for anything — that perhaps is wisdom. Give ourselves up, according to the hour, to confidence, to skepticism, to optimism, to irony, and we may be sure that at certain moments at least we shall be with the truth. . . . Good humor is a philosophic state of mind ; it seems to say to Nature that we take her no more seriously than she takes us." These words of Renan are quite in the spirit of this Survey ; though Koheleth has infinitely more dignity, and deepens his brave good humor by the interest that he has primarily at heart, the interest of soul-building.

THE FIFTH SURVEY

AVAILS OF WISDOM

The thesis of the Survey.

WISDOM giveth strength to the wise man, more than ten chieftains that are in the city.

CHAP. VII. 19.

Wisdom, assumed by Koheleth at the beginning (Survey i. 3) as the guide of his quest, has thus far answered every demand, and though itself stretching beyond exploration (i. 20), has proved itself polarly superior to folly (i. 74), and is recognized as a main element in the intrinsic furnishing of manhood (i. 125). Set over against money as a practical support of life, it has this point of superiority, that it is an inner vitalizer (iv. 80). It is time now to take up more definitely the study of wisdom itself, and especially its avails, as applied to the emergencies of life and destiny.

For the significance of wisdom, as an asset of life, see Survey i. 3, note.

LINE 1. The first sentence is a kind of proposition, or thesis, for the whole Survey: it sets before us the general truth that it is to wisdom, rather than to warlike or civic might, that we are to look for real strength and support in life. The same praise of wisdom and of the sage is repeated (l. 35) at the beginning of the section which, after the untoward elements are reckoned, takes up the positive avails.

I

FOR that there is not a righteous man on earth, who doeth good and sinneth not, — give not thy mind, therefore to all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thine own servant cursing

The untoward side: wisdom is not in casual words; is far to seek; and debasable.

CHAP. VII. 20, 21.

4–34. This section considers the discount or negative side of the subject, introducing it, as is usual with Koheleth's generalizations, with a concrete and near-by instance.

4. *For that*, etc. It seems better, as is here done, to read this remark as appended to the next, giving a reason for not paying heed to casual words. That men are universally imperfect does not need, at this age of wisdom philosophy, to be propounded as a new truth ; Job's friends, and Job himself, have already insisted upon it as an irrefragable truth. To take it as reason for the next here amounts to saying, Do not demand more from men's words than is in man's soul ; do not expect perfect wisdom, or perfect consistency, from a sinful nature.

7. *Lest thou hear ;* the instance of the servant's cursing is taken, it would seem, as commonest and nearest home ; as much as to say, If you call men to account for all their words, you cannot stir out of doors without finding occasion for censure. If this is Koheleth's way of saying no man is a hero to his valet, he is also as ready as the moderns in taking his share of the blame ; in cursing his master, the valet does merely what the master equally tends to do. Koheleth is covertly reading himself a lesson here ; he has been irritated by the babble of words around him (Survey iii. 66, 77, and notes), but instead of inveigh-

thee. For many times, also, as thy
10 heart knoweth, thou too hast cursed
others.

All this have I tried by wisdom; I said, Oh, let me be wise! — and it was far from me. Far off, that which
15 is; and deep, deep — who shall find it?

ing against them as folly, seems resolved here to remember that he himself may be subject to similar failings.

9. *As thy heart knoweth;* Koheleth's own insight, the advantage of which he is ready to give to the servant, tells him that casual words, a hasty, ill-considered curse, do not surely represent the man; you cannot measure a man's wisdom or character by them.

12. *All this;* first of all what is given, or suggested, in the preceding paragraph; but also, perhaps, all the foregoing problems and experiences of life. If you cannot find wisdom in words that are spoken, where can you find it? Too obviously, wisdom is far to seek.

14. *That which is;* the reality, the true inwardness of things, below all seeming and all disguise. Words may be weak, or hypocritical, or corrupt; you cannot assuredly gather wisdom from them. The course of action we adopt does not always issue in success; nor is the success itself a satisfaction. There is nothing yet revealed to Koheleth which unveils the secret of the permanent and the central. The best that can be said of him is that his heart is set in that direction, ready to appropriate the truth as it comes to light; but that no more can yet be said points to the essential pathos and irony of his book; see Introductory Study, p. 37.

I turned, I and my heart, to know
and explore and prove wisdom and
true appraisal; and to know that
wickedness is fatuity, and that folly

CHAP. VII. 25.

16. *I and my heart;* Koheleth's quaint way of saying that he enlisted his whole nature, not intellect alone but heart and life too, in the search for wisdom. He is a keen student, but also sympathetic, feeling the whole burden of the world problem.

18. *True appraisal;* the word thus translated is quite characteristic of this Survey; see also l. 27 (*account*) and l. 34 (*devices*, a word from the same root, though not quite identical). It seems to refer to the judgment or estimate formed from a thorough canvass of all the elements of a case; or perhaps what logicians call the working hypothesis. It is a word that is naturally needed in Koheleth's vocabulary of induction; compare Introductory Study, p. 176.

18. *That wickedness is fatuity*, etc. This identifying of wickedness with fatuity and folly with madness is the fundamental thesis of the wisdom philosophy; but it seems to have become a kind of academic theory, it has lost its grip on the inner life. Koheleth subjects it here to renewed examination, opens the question anew. This is in accordance with his verifying and inductive attitude; he will take nothing, not even his venerable body of wisdom, for granted. At the same time he is not only seeking a more solid basis of estimate, but rescuing the theory from the cold-blooded, intellectual, academic tone into which it has lapsed; to take in all the elements of the appraisal, the heart also must speak (see note, l. 16).

is madness. And bitterer than death
I find the woman whose heart is
snares and nets, whose hands are fet-
ters. He that pleaseth God shall es-
cape from her; but the sinner shall
be caught by her. Lo, this have I

CHAP. VII. 26, 27.

20. *Bitterer than death;* the concrete case of woman, so dwelt upon in Proverbs, is first brought up; as if his thought were, A man whose wisdom suffices against this subtlest of temptations may regard his life as fortified for anything. If the warning in Proverbs against the strange woman is a young man's warning, this may be regarded as the seasoned, well-grounded, and therefore weightier warning of elderly life.

21. *Heart . . . snares and nets; hands . . . fetters;* here, as in Proverbs, it is not the sensuality that most disturbs the writer; it is the enslavement and disintegration of soul. Nor is it, apparently, the strange woman, as such, that he has in mind; it is that woman nature which, encountered apart from wisdom, lays such subtle yet fatal power on man through the emotional and affectional nature. Woman is the type embodiment of a life in which the affections have predominance of the unimpassioned intellect; when, therefore, this latter yields control, the result is disastrous to man, and he finds himself ensnared and fettered.

23. *He that pleaseth God* is Koheleth's name for the man whose life, lived freely and self-directively, yet evinces its integrity and rightness; compare Survey i. 124, 128. This is already identified also with fearing God; compare Survey iv. 101, and note. The favor and fear of God are the only stay in the inner conflicts of life.

found, saith Koheleth, adding one to another to arrive at the account; which even yet my soul seeketh, and I have not found: one man, out of a thousand, have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found.

CHAP. VII. 27, 28.

28. *Which even yet my soul seeketh;* would Koheleth by this periphrasis intimate that the daring assertion that he is about to make is still under advisement?

29. *One man . . . but a woman . . . not.* No assertion of Koheleth's has incurred such criticism as this; and in itself it is sufficient to drive a French consciousness, like that of Renan, into the imagination of all sorts of Parisian intrigues on Koheleth's part, and the subsequent disillusion and disgust. There is no warrant for this. Koheleth's conclusion is merely the verdict forced upon him by the test of wisdom, with its judicial, scientific assessment of life. To find wisdom in absolute control is rare, as rare as one in a thousand among men, whose temperament is judicial; among women, whose judgments are so much more swayed by intuition and emotion, it is at least one rarer. Between intellect and emotion, intellect, in a life devoted to wisdom, must have the casting vote; and to say it has the casting vote more rarely among women than among men is hardly more than to recognize the fundamental distinction of the feminine temperament. Koheleth is not venting a personal spleen, nor drawing an indictment against the sex; and he who scents an unsavory scandal here makes exposure of himself. If in a cold, legalistic era, like the one in which Koheleth moved, woman fails to attain the highest definition of her mission, it is yet interesting to note that in the more

This only, see, only this have I found,
that God made man upright, and they
have sought out many devices.

II

The positive avails:

35 Who is like the wise man? and

perfect era of grace and truth, her true mission appears; consider how Jesus acknowledged it, Matthew xxvi. 13, and how, in the gracious ministries of love, she is far in advance of man.

33. *God made man upright*, etc. This is Koheleth's summary of the untoward side, made up from examination of the subtlest and most potent forms of evil allurement. It portrays what is natural to a manhood moving consciously in the domain of unchosen law, and not yet aware of the highest spiritual values. If a man so situated cannot renounce obligation to his law, his next impulse is to accommodate it, interpret it, so that his obedience to it may follow the line of least resistance. All that he can evade, in his own self-interest, he will. And this, Koheleth says, is what man has done with his own human nature. He has "sought out many devices," which have so obscured, interpreted away, evaded the law of his being, that he comes dangerously near perverting his very fundamental nature. And this, in making up the avails of wisdom, is to be reckoned on the discount side.

35. *Who is like the wise man?* With this question Koheleth resumes the positive side of his inquiry, the net avails intimated at the beginning of the Survey. He takes up this side now with a kind of augmented emphasis, as much as to imply, In spite of the grievous discounts and debase-

who, like him, knoweth the meaning of a thing? A man's wisdom lighteth

wisdom before the powers of judgment.

CHAP. VIII. 1.

ments of wisdom, it is with the wise man, if with any one, that the solution of life is to be found.

36. *The meaning of a thing;* Koheleth has found "that which is," the underlying reality of things, far off and deep, l. 14, above. But here it is the wise man who comes nearest to it; it is directed wisdom, not instinct, that is to be resorted to. Perhaps this knowing the meaning of things, on the part of the wise man, is thought of also as contrasted to the little whittling devices of the generality of men. It requires only a small mind to evade by little subterfuges; the larger mind, the wise man's, is not only above such things, but deeper than they.

37. *Lighteth up his face;* the transfiguring power of mind, thought, character, which though not the highest spiritual effect, is real and potent as far as it goes. The following, from Stevenson's *Inland Voyage*, may be worth citing here: "To be even one of the outskirters of art, leaves a fine stamp on a man's countenance. I remember once dining with a party in the inn at *Château Landon*. Most of them were unmistakable bagmen; others well-to-do peasantry; but there was one young fellow in a blouse, whose face stood out from among the rest surprisingly. It looked more finished; more of the spirit looked out through it; it had a living, expressive air, and you could see that his eyes took things in. My companion and I wondered greatly who and what he could be. It was fair time in *Château Landon*, and when we went along to the booths, we had our question answered; for there was our friend busily fiddling for the peasants to caper to. He was a wandering violinist."

up his face, and the hardness of his countenance is changed.

Counsel to bow to the powers that be, even though arbitrary;

40 My counsel is, keep the command of the king, and that on account of the oath of God. Haste not thou to go from his presence; stand not out in an evil matter; for all that he pur-
45 poseth he will do. For the king's

CHAP. VIII. 1–4.

38. *The hardness;* the German translation of this is *Roheit*, rawness. It seems to refer partly to that vacant look of ignorance, which gazes and sees no meaning in things, partly to the stolid and crude look of one who brings no thought to bear on life, has never learned to think. By becoming a creature of large discourse, looking before and after, man first of all transfigures himself.

40. *My counsel is,* — the original is simply "I, — keep the command," etc.

42. *The oath of God;* whether this means the coronation oath on the part of the monarch, or the oath of allegiance on the part of the subject, comes to the same thing. The king, by virtue of his office, is one to be obeyed; obedience is not a personal but a state affair. It is practical wisdom, even in a despot-ridden land, to conform to the established order of things, and obey the office if not the man. The powers that be are ordained of God.

42. *To go from his presence,* as a sign of anger or rebellion.

45. *He will do;* it is as incumbent on the king, by virtue of his office, to be firm in his purposes, even apart from their reasonableness, as it is on the subject to obey him. He represents permanence, established-ness; his decrees

word is power, and who shall say to him, "What doest thou?" He that keepeth the commandment shall know no evil thing; and a wise man's heart will recognize time and judgment.

For time and judgment there is,

are the court of appeal, and must be bowed to as final. Loyalty to government is a dictate of wisdom.

48. *Shall know no evil thing;* law is not made for the righteous but for the wicked; see 1 Timothy i. 9. By keeping the command one avoids collisions, keeps on the safe side.

49. *A wise man's heart;* such counsel as this is made not merely as the expression of a cowardly or depressed spirit; it is the utterance of wisdom, it adapts itself to circumstances. In wisdom the spirit itself is enlisted; it conforms itself voluntarily, even to what it cannot help, and thus makes itself partner in the régime of law by which it is encompassed.

50. *Time and judgment;* that is, the fit occasion of things and the fitting estimate of things. One mark of wisdom is tact; it knows what is right but also what is expedient, what is practical as well as what is true. This whole paragraph is a plea for that kind of wisdom which consists in adjustment to actual affairs.

51. *Time and judgment there is;* a reiteration of the fundamental assertion already made in the Second Survey, ll. 49, 50. Koheleth is sure, from the very constitution of the world and the times, that a time of solution as well as a time of puzzles is due; it is with this idea that he ends the whole book, Epilogue, l. 21. To recognize such junctures, in the concrete affairs of life, is the office of wisdom.

waiting for the time when judgment shall appear,

to every purpose, — though the evil of man is great upon him. For no one knoweth what shall be; for after
55 what manner it shall be, who shall

CHAP. VIII. 6, 7.

52. *Though the evil of man;* a recognition of the discounts that he has been recounting, ll. 4–34; which, in their accumulation of "many devices," have really wrought to impair the clear insight of wisdom. It requires an effort of philosophy to maintain the assertion that there *is* time and judgment, for things do not look that way.

53. *For no one knoweth;* the amplification here following, representing as it does a very obtrusive fact, is appended to a clause beginning with *though*, making the effect of a digression or disproportion of thought. It is following out the line of the subordinate clause instead of the principal; an occasional mark of Koheleth's imperfect literary massing, compare Survey vi. 29–34. The thought thrust in, No one knoweth what shall be, is Koheleth's frequent remonstrance against the speculative tendencies of his time; maintained here by a census of things that are least in man's power. See Survey iv. 44, and note.

54. *After what manner;* the weak point in this whole matter of vaticination is, that men have no data on which to base their view of the future, there is none to reveal the manner of it. Take, for instance, the post-obituary hereafter, in which in Koheleth's mind the idle vaticination of his age culminates, — who can tell the conditions of a disembodied existence? As John Fiske says (*Life Everlasting*, p. 58): "Our notion of the survival of conscious activity apart from material conditions is not only unsupported by any evidence that can be gathered from the world of which

tell him? No man hath power over
the wind, to restrain the wind; and
there is no power over the day of
death; and there is no discharge
while the battle is on; and wickedness 60
shall not deliver its devotee.

we have experience but is utterly and hopelessly inconceivable." It is just this phase of agnosticism that Koheleth's scientific sense holds.

56. *No man hath power;* the examples that follow centre not in lack of insight but in lack of power; as if his thought were, You cannot bank on a future which you have no inner power to mould or avert.

60. *While the battle is on;* lit. *in war*, or *battle*. It seems to mean that the time for discharge is not while actual fighting is going on.

61. *Shall not deliver;* this assertion gains its strength by being at the climax point in a category of things that can most strongly be affirmed; as much as to say, if you cannot change the law of things in the case of the wind, and death, and battle, much more can you not change the law that wickedness brings retribution. To expect to be delivered from woe by wickedness is to trust to reversing the immutable laws of being. Koheleth seems to have in mind cases, prevalent in his time, wherein the idle fancies about the hereafter had led to a kind of discount of it, using it as an unspoken pretext for living an evil life and trusting to escape its consequences. The implication seems to be, that any reliance on immortality which leads to slackened energy or devotion to wickedness here is fallacious; it obliterates the bounds of good and evil, wisdom and

and when the balance shall be made even.

All this have I seen when I applied my heart to every work that is wrought under the sun: — a time when man ruleth over man, to his hurt. But so also have I seen the wicked buried; and they came, and from the holy place they went, and were forgotten in the city where they had so done; this too, a vanity.

Because sentence against an evil

folly. Wickedness is a broken reed, whether here or yonder.

62. *All this*, namely, what is to be named. To what has just been said about the fallacy of trusting in wickedness, the objection might presumably be raised, But we see wickedness raised to power and success, and dying with honor. Koheleth concedes (and it is not a new concession) that wickedness has been seen in the ascendant, in rampant, heartless tyranny; but also that the wicked man has passed away in death, and has been forgotten. You cannot bank on wickedness, therefore; it has not the future. This idea, taken here as an assured finding of Wisdom, is one which Job maintained against his friends by hard fighting; see my *Epic of the Inner Life*, p. 274.

68. *And were forgotten;* Koheleth thus puts trust in wickedness into the category of vain and transitory things; one is reminded of his "Generation goeth, and generation cometh," Proem, l. 6, and "There is no remembrance," *ib.* 27. In a more generalized way he takes up the vanity of this again, l. 134, below.

work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men within them is full-set to do evil, — just because a sinner may do evil a hundred times, and survive it. For all that, I know that there shall be good

It is wisdom not to presume on delay of judgment,

but to hold to the sure law of good,

CHAP. VIII. 11, 12.

74. *Full-set to do evil;* as men have been represented as presuming on speculative hereafters to do evil (l. 61, note), so here they are represented as presuming on delay of judgment, playing, as it were, with a sleeping volcano. It is looking for the eventuation of things outside of them instead of within, and because it is not imminent they take occasion to follow their hearts into evil. They thus, by following present inclination, make up life not with reference to a judgment that is intrinsic, but to a presumed accident; it is the childish evasion of penalty that governs them. Not the law within but the impunity without is their guide; so their life is a kind of culprit life, a dodging of eternal issues. Such life is the polar contrast to the life intrinsic.

75. *Just because;* this clause, its introducing word (*because*) being the same in Hebrew as the one in l. 71, is connected, by way of repeat or supplement, to the clause before, instead of to the succeeding, as is usually done. The more literal translation calls for it, and it is more consecutive.

76. *For all that, I know;* the permanent conclusion of wisdom, the solid foundation which no discovery of vanity can shake. In the fear of God itself is something intrinsic (compare Survey iv. 101); it is its own life and blessedness; it is not a dodging of something to come, but a present character and value. The good of the fear of God proves itself.

to them that fear God, that fear before
His face; and good shall not be to
80 the wicked, nor shall he prolong his
shadow-like days, because he feareth
not before the face of God.

It is a vanity which is wrought on

CHAP. VIII. 12–14.

79. *Good shall not be to the wicked;* in his dodging of judgment, as represented in l. 74, he is not looking for good, but simply braving impunity. Prolong such a state ever so far, and no positive good can come of it, only a vacuity. Good that is postponed to a future is not good at all; to look for it, when the present bent is evil, is to cherish a fallacy.

80. *His shadow-like days;* a name which Koheleth gives to all the vain life of earth, Survey iv. 42, but especially applicable to the life of the wicked, because the days spent in postponing life's issues are no real character but a shadow, a dream.

81. *Because he feareth not;* this thrice-repeated fear, or reverence, seems insisted on as a counterweight to the braving of a delayed judgment. The lack of such reverence is itself a lack, in effect, of vitality. Job (xxvii. 10) gives a similar account of the wicked brought to his doom and having no fear of God, or delight in Him, wherewith to meet it.

83. *It is a vanity;* Koheleth here takes up for fuller consideration what he broached in Survey iv. 90, and has touched upon casually in l. 75 above. The difference in tone between Koheleth and Job is notable in the fact that while Job views this mystery of righteous and wicked with dismay, as a traverse of justice (Job xxi. 6, 7), Koheleth, in calm philosophical mood, views it as a vanity. This does not indicate that Koheleth sees less clearly or feels less

the earth, that there are righteous to whom it befalleth according to the work of the wicked; and there are wicked to whom it befalleth according to the work of the righteous. I have said that this also is vanity; and I have commended good cheer, holding

deeply than Job; it means rather that the fact which in Job's time was as it were a new discovery throwing current doctrines into confusion, is in Koheleth's later age a part of the recognized order — or disorder — of things. None the less it is "a vanity," — this evident fact that you cannot fathom life by the standard of rewards and penalties so as to tell from the latter just the mind of God. You see wicked prospered and righteous afflicted; there is nothing solid yielded, therefore, by thus observing what goes on without; you cannot build life on it. What, then, can you trust?

88. *I have said;* perhaps referring to what he said about the tyrant, l. 70, above.

89. *And I have commended good cheer;* repeatedly, as the solution of every Survey. Good cheer is commended because it is the expression of a nature at peace, and thus in present possession of its blessedness. To eat and to drink is recommended not as the securing of so much food and wine, for the viands themselves are vanity; it is the sign that the life is in good running order. In every other place where these have been commended (Survey i. 118; ii. 31; iii. 118), they have been conjoined with happy labor. Here they are mentioned as a means of sweetening toil. If that hardest portion in life is accepted with joy, and the joy

and to possess the soul in that good cheer which sweetens toil.

that there is nothing better to man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad, and that this go along with him in his toil, the days of his
95 life which God hath given him under the sun.

III

When I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to see the toilsome labor

Chap. viii. 15, 16.

remains as long as he lives, a constant fountain of gladness and good cheer, why should man torment himself with the uncertainty of what is going to befall? A compensation this, in which the inconclusive speculations about future judgments or future rewards disappear.

97–139. In this section Koheleth brings his wisdom to bear on the most baffling problem of his inquiry, the problem of the universal sameness and the universal labor. No aspect of it is new; it has been broached in Survey i. 4–12; ii. 54–66, and touched upon many times. But it needs the more to be met here because it is a mystery that cannot be fathomed; the part of Wisdom, when all is said, is to determine not what may be known, but what may be done about it, what life may be lived and enjoyed in the face of an all-pervading enigma.

98. *The toilsome labor;* it was the sight of this, and the thought of its interminable routine, without apparent progress or purpose, which pressed from Koheleth his initial question, "What profit?" (Proem, l. 3) and caused all his sympathetic sadness (Survey i. 5, 22).

that is wrought upon earth, — for verily there is that seeth no sleep with his eyes day or night, — then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot fathom the work that is wrought under the sun; for however man may labor to search out, he will not be able to find; nay, though the sage deem he knoweth, he will not be able to find.

Wisdom before the enigmas of destiny.

For all this have I laid to heart, even to explain all this: that the

CHAP. VIII. 16–IX. 1.

102. *All the work of God* is identified with the work that is wrought under the sun. In spite of all its evils and crooked devices, yet from a point of view higher up it is still the work of God. — *Man cannot fathom;* this is Koheleth's more deliberate iteration of what he has already said, Survey ii. 27. There the assertion was appended to a weightier one; here it is taken up as a main truth, which in its turn must be verified by wisdom.

106. *Though the sage deem he knoweth;* yet the sage should know if any one. This is Koheleth's way of acknowledging that human reason, like water, cannot rise higher than its own level. Knowledge, too, is in the same category with the rest; it looks on and observes, but not from a height above or an event beyond; it is entangled in the same perplexed web as the works themselves. Koheleth is dimly aware that the supreme solution of life is not yet in the manhood consciousness; to attain it man must rise higher in the scale of being.

Presume not on the sameness of destiny as warrant for unwisdom;

righteous and the wise, with their works, are in the hand of God. Whether it be love or hate, knoweth no man, — as it lieth all spread out

CHAP. IX. 1.

112. *Are in the hand of God;* meanwhile enigmas of destiny are in safe hands, and may be left there. As an apostle puts it later, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Timothy ii. 19. The implication is, that only God can penetrate motives and mete bounds of conduct; we can merely look on from the outside.

113. *Knoweth no man,* emphatic as contrasted to God. No man can go below the surface and judge the springs of human action.

114. *As it lieth all spread out before them;* lit. "all before them." It is necessary to supply several words to bring out the meaning of לְפָנֵיהֶם, which has a local rather than temporal sense, something like "in their presence." It is a descriptive phrase, in which Koheleth endeavors to portray the world of human deeds as a phantasmagoria, wherein we can see actions taking place, as in a show, but cannot tell whether they are inspired by love or hate. After all, man can see only the outside of things; the tangle of motives, loves, and hates, some good, some bad, none so predominant as to tip the balance absolutely to good or evil, is therefore not to be judged by the intellect alone, or by man's judgment. "The recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen, and how work is actually done. Compared with this world of living individualized feelings, the world of generalized objects which the intellect contemplates is

before them. All cometh to one as to 115
another; one event to righteous and
wicked; to the good, and to the clean,

CHAP. IX. 2.

without solidity or life. As in stereoscopic or kinetoscopic pictures seen outside the instrument, the third dimension, the movement, the vital element, are not there. We get a beautiful picture of an express train supposed to be moving, but where in the picture, as I have heard a friend say, is the energy or the fifty miles an hour?" — James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 501.

115. *To one as to another;* lit. "all as to all." — *One event;* Koheleth is thinking of the end of life in the same phenomenal aspect that he has just ascribed to the welter of worldly acts and motives; the final event, too, we can see only from the outside. The fullness and absolute tone in which he amplifies this assertion would seem to indicate that he is making it good, in a kind of defiance, against men who have gone beyond the warrant in interpreting future things. He has already affirmed the same thing, Survey i. 79, ii. 58–66, more especially with reference to the animal nature; here he gives it a vaster sweep by applying it to the religious standards of Mosaism. It is his most emphatic and absolute confession, wrung from him by honesty to the facts of his dispensation, that life and immortality are not yet in the clear ken of the manhood soul.

117. *To the clean, and to the unclean;* this names the distinctive feature that marks off the Jew from other nations; and Koheleth's assertion shows how far beyond national boundaries his imagination has broadened. It is man as man, Gentile as well as Jew, man essential, that he is contemplating; the one event he sees makes no difference for ceremonial, or national, or even religious distinctions.

and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not ;
like good, like sinner ; he that sweareth as he that shunneth an oath. This is an evil in all that is wrought under the sun, that there is one event to all ; and this too, that the heart of the sons

CHAP. IX. 2, 3.

118. *That sacrificeth*, and *that sweareth*, in the next line, are selected, perhaps, as the more scrupulous and holy inside the Jewish religion; as much as to say, even the most exacting observance of legalism cannot make special claims on the hereafter.

121. *This is an evil;* "There is no escape from recognizing the incurable, ineffaceable evil in things." It is ingrained and inveterate under the sun. Though it is in the order of things, and though our business is to adjust ourselves by wisdom to it, it is none the less an evil. Koheleth sums it up here in two counts. An evil, for one thing, that in a state of existence calling logically for a key and *raison d'être*, the key is not given. A moral law, a demand on conduct, should vindicate itself ; the end should crown the work. Here, in the absolute sameness of outcome, it is not so.

124. *And this too ;* for another thing, that the heart is not adjusted even to the standard there is. Koheleth's conviction, ll. 77–82, is that good shall not be to the wicked, and that good shall be to those who fear God ; yet the instinct of man leads him to the evil. This summary, which Koheleth recalls from l. 73 above, is his Seventh of Romans ; it finds the same evil in the world, that law is good but man is somehow a misfit.

of men is full of evil, and madness is 125
in their hearts while they live, and
after that — to the dead.

For who is he that is bound up
with all the living? — to him there is

CHAP. IX. 3, 4.

125. *Madness;* compare l. 20 above. No milder word can name that inveterate tendency in man to work against his own interests.

127. *To the dead;* a touch of the same phantasmagoric description as above, l. 114. He sees the crowds as it were tumbling into the charnel-house and lost, as in the picture given in the Vision of Mirzah. Madness in this life, a heap of huddled corpses at the end, — what a picture!

128. *Bound up with all the living;* the expression seems to be suggested as a companion image to the picture just given of the dead. The dead tumbled together in a moulder-ing heap, the living bound together in a mutually support-ing bundle; for the phrase, compare 1 Samuel xxv. 29. The translation *bound up* is adopted here, instead of *exempted*, the marginal reading (*K'ri*) for the written text (*K'thib*). The sense is clearer, also, to join the question with the next clause instead of the preceding, as indeed the new meaning also demands.

129. *To him there is hope. . . . For the living know;* Kohe-leth is evidently laboring to set the hopefulness and intel-ligence of life over against the blankness of the grave. It is the contrast between the one who has life in his heart, as an inspiration, and the one who has death in his thoughts, as a dread. It gives another energy to one's whole being, even while the same ending continues unabolished. Steven-son's glowing words are in place here, dealing as they do

but make up life with reference rather to life than to the impending death.

hope ; for the living dog is better than the dead lion. For the living know that they will die ; but the dead know not anything, nor have they reward any more, for the memory of them is forgotten. Alike their love, their hate,

CHAP. IX. 4–6.

with the same imagery : "Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind. And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall, and in mid-career, laying out vast projects, and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope, and their mouths full of boastful language, they should be at once tripped up and silenced : is there not something brave and spirited in such a termination ? and does not life go down with a better grace, foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas ? " Koheleth, as appears from the solution that he sets over against this passage, ll. 140–155, is trying to set up a similar current of brave hopefulness in life which will enable man to ignore death.

130. *The living dog ;* one of Koheleth's homely maxims mosaicked in with his argument.

132. *Know not anything ;* Koheleth throughout his book describes things as he sees them. The dead are simply dead ; and as there is none to report to man "what shall be after him," the state after death is regarded as non-existent. So far as any motive or inspiration that it can furnish, it is so; therefore we have no warrant for feeding our life on the rewards, or the loves, or the hates, or the ambitions that supposably came to us from beyond.

134. *The memory of them is forgotten ;* as Koheleth has said of all earthly things, Proem, l. 27.

their ambition, are perished long ago, and portion have they no more for ever, in all that is wrought under the sun.

IV

GO THOU, eat thy bread with gladness, and drink with merry heart thy wine; for already hath God accepted thy works. At every season let thy

140 **The solution: life fully furnished and faithful to a divinely accepted work.**

CHAP. IX. 6–8.

137. *Portion . . . under the sun;* compare Survey i. 61, note. Man's work is oftenest mentioned as his portion; it is fitting here, therefore, that the dead should be mentioned as no more having portion *in all that is wrought.* If they no longer share in the work of the world, they are no longer a source of motive and energy.

140–155. *Go thou,* etc. This solution is the most detailed, the most emphatic, the most practical, of all that have been given, because its induction of facts is greater, and because the mists have been more fully cleared away from the goal of life. And it has reduced itself more and more to the life intrinsic, of which this is a workingman's portrayal.

142. *For already hath God accepted thy works;* this is the key to the hopefulness and courage of the passage. It is the thing to take for granted. Not looking to some indefinite future when your works *will be* accepted; not postponing life therefore, but taking what is as your portion. You can get reward in work here and now, and God is as good and as present as He ever will be. All these details of eating and drinking, white garments and oil, domestic comfort and love of wife, are so many details of making

garments be white, and oil upon thy
145 head not be lacking. Prove life with
a woman whom thou lovest all the
days of thy vapor-life which He hath
given thee under the sun, — all the
days of thy vanity. For this is thy
150 portion in life, and in thy labor which
thou laborest under the sun. All that
thy hand findeth to do, do thou with

one's self at home; they virtually say, Here is your home, here is your work, here is the field of your interests and talents; *be* at home.

145. *Prove life;* lit. "see life;" sharing in joys and sorrows and work.

146. *A woman whom thou lovest;* Koheleth thus sets his stamp on the married life as an element of the ideal felicity of this earthly state. The whole tone of it is in contrast to what he has said of woman in relation to the world's froward devices, ll. 20–31. In his ideal of life woman is not set over against man as his tempter, but set by his side as sharer and helper.

147. *Thy vapor-life . . . thy vanity;* this side of it is brought up again in full sight of the wise course here inculcated; as much as to say, Rescue so much that is solid and real from the vanity in which you move. One thinks of Omar Khayyám's, —

> "A moment's Halt — a momentary taste
> Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste —
> And Lo! — the phantom Caravan has reach'd
> The NOTHING it set out from — Oh, make haste!"

151. *All that thy hand findeth to do;* the contrast to Omar

thy might; for there is no work, nor cleverness, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. 155

is as striking as the parallel. Omar appeals to the despairing and pessimistic side of life; Koheleth to the active and responsible. "Wo du bist, sei alles," says Goethe; where thou art, be all there; a good parallel to this summary of the life of energy and hope.

155. *In the grave;* in Sheol. This is no more to be pressed into an absolute denial of immortality than are Jesus' words, "The night cometh, when no man can work," John ix. 4. It simply takes what is before the consciousness of all, Sheol, the place of the dead, and bases its counsel on that. The contemplation of that is enough to motive all his plea. Koheleth has in mind the difference between a life fed with images of energy and happy achievement and a life filled with images of death and cessation. So the upshot is, not, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, but, Let us eat and drink because we have found our intrinsic portion, a work that may take in all our powers and delights. Elsewhere Koheleth has inveighed against feeding life on idle speculations; here he is making his plea good against feeding life on the prospect of gain. It is the vital wisdom with which he meets his age's disposition to postpone life or to live it with a politic eye on the future; the real profit, or *yithrōn*, of which we can be sure.

THE SIXTH SURVEY

WISDOM ENCOUNTERING TIME AND CHANCE

Discount for the thwarting element of time and chance.

I TURNED, and I saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; nay

CHAP. IX. 11.

With the foregoing Survey Koheleth's treatment of his course of thought is in the main complete. The present Survey, as is suggested in the opening paragraph, occupies itself with some of the emergencies, particular occasions, chances, and hard places of life, bringing wisdom in various ways to bear upon them. It is of more miscellaneous character than the preceding Surveys; in its collection of detached maxims it seems to indicate that either the topic was left unfinished and unrevised, or the occasion was taken to group under this head some maxims left over from Koheleth's collection, which was confessedly in part compiled. Part of the maxims are in prose, part in poetry.

LINE 1. *I turned, and I saw;* after Koheleth's usual manner the Survey begins with some concrete cases, out of which the generalized thought grows. As related to previous Surveys, this is like bringing in exceptions to the ordinary rule of things.

2. *The race is not to the swift;* but the inference is not, Be slow, or indifferent. It remains true that swiftness is better than slowness, and wisdom is to folly as light to

further, that bread is not to the wise,
nor riches to the prudent, nor yet 5
favor to the learned; for time and
chance befalleth them all; nor indeed

darkness; Survey i. 73. It remains true that these are intrinsic endowments of life, their own reward apart from results. It is not for infallible results that we should value them. We cannot surely say, Given swiftness, heroism, wisdom, and the rest, the results must follow. There is still, as in games so in life, the element of chance, accident, luck, to be reckoned with.

6. *Time and chance.* To the general subject of timeliness Koheleth has devoted a whole Survey (ii.); and has brought it up again, Survey v. 49, as an element in a wise man's tactfulness. But just as it *ought* to be observed, so also it may fail. A man's endowments may not be adapted to the occasion; his plans, shrewd and able, may be like the Rev. Amos Barton's moves in chess, — "admirably well calculated, supposing the state of the case were otherwise." — *And chance;* Koheleth has already made a sweeping assertion about chance, as related to man's animal nature, Survey ii. 55; here its application is to man's work and plans. Maeterlinck thus defines this element of the accidental in life: "We have our thoughts, which build up our intimate happiness or sorrow; and upon this events from without have more or less influence. . . . And we have our will, which our thoughts feed and sustain; and many useless or harmful events can be held in check by our will. But around these islets, within which is a certain degree of safety, of immunity from attack, extends a region as vast and uncontrollable as the ocean, swayed by chance as the

doth man know his time. As the fishes that are caught in a deadly net, and as the birds taken in the snare, — like them the sons of men are snared at a time of disaster, when it falleth upon them suddenly.

I

Wisdom as an unvalued power working

But this too I saw: wisdom under the sun, and it was great unto me.

Chap. ix. 12, 13.

waves are swayed by the wind. Neither will nor thought can keep one of these waves from suddenly breaking upon us; and we shall be caught unawares, and perhaps be wounded and stunned. Only when the wave has retreated can thought and will begin their beneficent action. Then they will raise us, and bind up our wounds, restore animation, and take careful heed that the mischief the shock has wrought shall not touch the profound sources of life." — *The Buried Temple*, p. 273.

11. *Are snared*, as if the trap were purposely set for them. "The air we breathe, the time we traverse, the space through which we move, are all peopled by lurking circumstances, which pick us out from among the crowd." — *Ib.* p. 275.

14. *But this too I saw: wisdom.* To offset these mysterious onsets of chance, a concrete example of wisdom is given, apparently to show how it, as a power in life, works just as secretly and potently as they. Wisdom is for Koheleth what thought and will are in the passages quoted from Maeterlinck. They "may, on the surface," he says (*ib.*

A little city there was, and the men within it few. And there came against it a great king, and beleaguered it, and built great mounds against it. And there was found therein a man poor and wise, and by his wisdom he saved the city. Yet not one remembered

under the surface of things.

20

Chap. ix. 14, 15.

p. 274), "appear very humble. In reality, however, unless chance assume the irresistible form of cruel disease or death, the workings of will and thought shall suffice to neutralize all its efforts, and to preserve what is best and most essential to man in human happiness." This makes thought and will merely remedial; Koheleth views wisdom as an adaptedness to all times of emergency and opportunity.

16. *A little city there was*, etc. Much study has been expended in the attempt to identify this parable with some historical event, but with no convincing result.

21. *By his wisdom;* this is the test of it all. Wisdom is the power that saves, that meets emergencies; it manifests its value in what it does. It is the unnoticed power under the surface of affairs, the power that is doing its work while clamors come and go.

22. *Not one remembered;* because, as everywhere, the fickle crowd were taken with what was showy or clamorous or had the prestige of riches. On the score of fame or reward, therefore, the poor man's wisdom was a failure; it was not to be valued for any cash equivalent or profit from outside. Koheleth's idea of the intrinsic as opposed to *yithrōn* is coming in sight again.

that poor man. And I said, Better is wisdom than might, though the wis-
25 dom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not regarded. Words of the wise, heard in quiet, are better than the clamor of him that ruleth among fools. Better is wisdom than

CHAP. IX. 16–18.

23. *Better is wisdom ;* the lack of appreciation and remembrance does not impair the absolute worth of wisdom ; it evinces its superiority by actually doing more, the practical test. If it is despised because it coëxists with poverty, the reproach is not in it, but in those who misjudge it.

24. *Than might ;* Survey v. 1.

27. *Heard in quiet ;* because quiet, a calm, unforced spirit, is the accessible spirit, the spirit that takes in and assimilates. Tennyson expresses a similar idea of the susceptibility of the soul to spiritual influences : —

> "They haunt the silence of the breast,
> Imaginations calm and fair,
> The memory like a cloudless air,
> The conscience as a sea at rest :
>
> "But when the heart is full of din,
> And doubt beside the portal waits,
> They can but listen at the gates,
> And hear the household jar within."
>
> *In Memoriam*, xciv.

Koheleth's thought is far less subtle, but it points in the same direction ; compare Survey iii. 62, and note.

28. *Him that ruleth among fools ;* Koheleth here comes again in contact with his pet antipathy, the wordiness of fools. One who exercises authority over such, however wise

weapons of war; though one sinner 30
destroyeth much good;— just as dead
flies taint and ferment the perfumer's
oil, so a little folly outweigheth wis-
dom and honor.

he may be, must raise his voice, must force the note, must clamor; and even then the access is only to fools.

31. *As dead flies*, etc. This is doubtless an aphorism from Koheleth's collection, and he has had to use a little violence to the continuity of his thought in finding a place for it. The main thesis is, that wisdom is better than weapons of war; the pendant to this, though one sinner destroyeth much good. If the thought had stopped here, the sense of digression, in the clause beginning with "though," would not have been great. But the matter of the subordinate clause itself provokes elucidation; at all events, here is the aphorism ready to illustrate it; so it is introduced in such manner as to elongate the tail of the sentence rather than enlarge the body. A little clumsy, from the point of view of its massing, but quite intelligible. For a similar construction, see Survey v. 53.

33. *A little folly*, with some stress on the *little*. The assertion is quite analogous to what is said about time and chance, l. 6. A lack in fitting the occasion may bring a plan otherwise good to nought; a dead fly may make a very costly oil rancid. The point is, the more fine and valuable the thing, the more minute defect may spoil it. Wisdom and honor, the highest, most delicate values in life, may be almost annulled by the contemptible little ingredient of folly, just because they are so fine. Coarse things are not so.

II

Prose aphorisms of wisdom's words and works.

35 THE heart of the wise is toward his right, but the heart of a fool toward his left. Nay, more, in the way, as the fool is walking his understanding faileth, and he saith to every one 40 that he is a fool.

CHAP. X. 2, 3.

35. *Toward his right . . . toward his left;* the distinction is not a moral one but practical ; it is directed against the futile, unhandy, useless ideals of a fool. He is, as we would say, no manager, has no gumption.

37. *In the way ;* the place of concourse and intercourse, where one should be sanest, where one's every-day abilities should count most. It requires least effort to walk, least wisdom, to keep to the highway ; yet even there, not in the strenuous occasions but there, the fool fails.

39. *And he saith to every one that he,* namely himself, *is a fool.* Some take it that he accuses others of folly, just as a drunkard thinks every one else is drunk. But this, though not untrue, seems to me a forced interpretation. Rather, what the fool says, whether in so many words or not, confesses folly. Just as a man's wisdom lights up his face (Survey v. 37), so the fool's whole expression of himself radiates folly. Society is full of persons who, in one way or other, advertise that they are fools, and are unashamed ; witness the nonsense that is said about art, and music, and public questions. A man may reveal his opinion on some question of taste or policy, saying nothing about himself at all, and yet all the while be writing himself an

If the spirit of the ruler riseth
against thee, leave not thy place, for
gentleness allayeth great offenses.

There is an evil I have seen under
the sun, such an error as proceedeth
from the ruler's quarter. Folly is

ass. It is men like this, I think, that Koheleth has here in mind.

42. *Leave not thy place;* that is, thy orbit, as it were, of calm good sense and good temper. Koheleth's ideal is, how to adapt yourself to circumstances so as to gain your point. And it reduces itself practically to, Keep your head and keep quiet. The same self-respecting wisdom, as expressed in obedience, is inculcated, Survey v. 40–45. Doubtless the arbitrary and despotic conditions of government in Koheleth's day were what made that side of wisdom important. It is the wisdom of the under man; but it evolved that idea, so great and masterful, which in one phase was afterward expressed in a beatitude, "Blessed are the meek."

45. *Such an error;* this sounds like a guarded expression, as if the writer were not free to give it the bad name it merited. He is not hinting, however, at the wickedness of such reversal in government, only at its lack of wisdom. And from this point of view the word is strictly true; it is an error, a disastrous blunder in government, to put foolish favorites above nobles.

46. *The ruler's quarter*, lit. "presence." That is, such an error as only a despotism could produce; not a common man's error this time, but a natural fruit of favoritism and tyranny. The Oriental despot, as a ruler, attracted fools as tainted meat attracts flies.

placed in the highest stations, while the nobles sit in lowly place. I have seen servants on horses, and princes
50 walking like menials on the earth.

He that diggeth a pit may fall therein; and he that breaketh through

CHAP. X. 6–8.

47. *While the nobles*, lit. "the rich." Koheleth's idea of the natural nobility of a state is that it is made up of those whose ability to get wealth has proved their prudence and wisdom; besides, the large interests they represent make them the natural arbiters in the public management and disposal of them. They are the substantial, responsible class, the real sinews of the body politic; while the supporters of a despotic government are adventurers and parasites. It is easy to see from this what Koheleth's ideal of good government is.

49. *Servants on horses;* the privilege of riding a horse, rather than an ass or mule, is the sign of distinction in Oriental countries; and here, it would seem, the contrast is all the more accentuated by making the princes walk.

50. *Like menials;* the same word is translated *servants* in the line above, but the present translation connotes the aspect of servitude that Koheleth wished to bring out.

51–60. The maxims grouped in this paragraph all deal with one subject, which is clinched in the last sentence, l. 59. They illustrate in various ways the idea that every course, in life or action, has its obverse, its risk. Wisdom, therefore, counts the cost, has the risk in mind, and is ready to take it; wisdom is preparedness for the contingent. This agrees well with the idea of time and chance which underlies this Survey.

a wall, a serpent may bite him. He that quarrieth stones may hurt himself with them. He that cleaveth wood may endanger himself thereby. If the iron be blunt, and he whet not the edge, then must he put forth greater strength. But the surplus that giveth success is wisdom.

CHAP. X. 8–10.

54. *Quarrieth stones . . . cleaveth wood;* an interest attaches to these verses from the fact that in the papyrus fragment of Sayings of our Lord, found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt a few years ago, there is a saying apparently modeled on a reminiscence of these words. So far as it may be deciphered it reads: "Jesus saith, Wherever there are . . . and there is one . . . alone, I am with him. Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I."

57. *If the iron be blunt,* etc. That same preparedness for the alternative leads one to save labor. Whetting the edge is putting head-work into the task, and thereby saving so much brute strength. If he do not so prepare, he must content himself with a lower grade of activity.

59. *But the surplus;* Koheleth's much-used word *yithrōn.* His idea is, that in all these activities the margin that really counts, that has, so to say, the balance of power, is wisdom. The rest is only such calculation as crude or brute labor can make; but the foresight that will take risks intelligently, so as to guard against or discount them, and that will take hold of a job of work by its smoothest and easiest end, is a kind of surplusage; it is the reserve power *more* than the raw

If the serpent hath bitten before
the charm, then is the charmer of no
advantage.

The words of a wise man's mouth
65 are grace; but the lips of a fool swal-
low him up. The beginning of the

task needs, but is left over for giving it character and success. We have but to project this whetting the edge into the multiplicity of contrivances, labor-saving devices, so characteristic of the American, to realize what is involved in Koheleth's practical wisdom. And in fact this is the expression, on the small scale of manual labor, of the attitude which on the moral and cosmic scale Koheleth maintains toward all his large problems of life.

62. *Of no advantage;* the same word *yithrōn* again. Even the wisdom must be *in time;* its timeliness is an essential element of the surplusage, or advantage, that it contributes.

65. *Are grace;* are compliant and affable, making their way thus by the line of least resistance. That is their wisdom; that quality conducts them to their end and goal. One of Poor Richard's proverbs is quite in the spirit of this: "The heart of the fool is in his mouth, but the mouth of the wise man is in his heart." — *Swallow him up;* that is, his own words work his defeat and disaster; or perhaps, as Koheleth had the contrast to the preceding clause in mind, the manner of them, their sharp temper, or inconsiderateness, or misfit to occasion, may make them futile.

66. *The beginning . . . the end;* a gradation of folly is here portrayed. To begin with there may be nothing harmful, only silliness or nonsense; but as the fool goes on, having to fortify one uttered folly by another, and bringing his will

words of his mouth is silliness, and
the end of his speech is mischievous
madness. Then, too, the fool multi-
plieth words; — though man knoweth
not what shall be, for what is to be
after him, who shall tell him? The
exertion of fools wearieth a man; one

and emotions to the reinforcing, he stops not for any wise balance until his words are in the extremity; the fatuity has become a mischievous madness. That is the tendency when judgment and principle are wanting.

68. *Of his speech;* lit. "of his mouth." So expressed, perhaps, as a note of disparagement.

69. *Multiplieth words;* with this feature of the description Koheleth comes upon a trait which he ascribes not only to fools, but also not obscurely to his age, which he regards as nearly swamped with words, probably of the speculative philosophy; compare Survey iii. 58–69, and notes, also *ib.* 80, and Introductory Study, pp. 42 sqq.

70. *Though man knoweth not;* this is the second time that Koheleth has connected the ignorance of future things with the multiplying of words; see Survey iv. 37–45, and notes there. The connection of this with his characteristic agnosticism, and with his censure of his age, is described in the Introductory Study: see reference in preceding note.

72. *The exertion of fools;* lit. "labor," or "toil." That is, he is trying so hard and so volubly, with such spilth of words, to set forth some attenuated idea, that the result is simply to tire out the hearer. — *Wearieth a man;* lit. "him;" but the question is, who is meant by *him?* To make it mean the fool, or every fool, as the Revised Ver-

knoweth not from it how to go to the
75 city.

III

Woe to thee, O land, whose king
is a boy!

Chap. x. 15, 16.

sion seems to do, is to make a singular pronoun refer to a plural antecedent. The passage is confessedly one of the most difficult in the book; but the nearest approach to clear sense seems to be that the man who hears so much labored explanation is not only wearied out (compare the slang expression, "You make me tired") by it, but cannot from it make out so much as the plainest information, — the way to the city, which ought to be the easiest thing in the world to point out. A variety of folk-expressions occur by way of parallel; for instance, "He does n't know enough to go in when it rains." The great exertion and little result here described recalls Shakespeare's description in the words of Macbeth, —

> "a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

The whole passage reveals such an animus of antipathy, on Koheleth's part, that we cannot but think he is near letting the word-mongery of his age sour him.

76–106. In the collection of aphorisms here beginning, the parallelism, and generally the imaginative or emotional touch, is so much more marked as to call for their being printed as poetry. The subject, too, corresponds; being generally more idealized, more of the inner world of ideals and sentiment.

77. *Whose king is a boy;* it may be that Koheleth, who

And whose princes feast in the morning!

Poetic aphorisms of wisdom,

Chap. x. 16.

is personating Solomon, intends here, in a mixture of prophecy and history, to allude to the young Rehoboam and his dissolute companions ; see 1 Kings xii. 1–20. With this agrees also the picture that he has given of folly usurping high places and debasing the wise princes, ll. 46–50 above. At the same time this may cover an allusion to contemporary conditions. Streane says (in his little commentary on Ecclesiastes, p. 98): "The case referred to can scarcely be an imaginary one. Ptolemy Epiphanes succeeded his father, Philopator, at the age of six years (205 B. C.), and during his minority there was much strife between the Syrian and Jewish factions in Egypt, and, on the part of some in high places, licentious indulgence all day and every day. Their feastings, we may well suppose, were not limited to the hours usually set apart for relaxation." If this was in Koheleth's mind, it is equally easy to identify Ptolemy Philopator (except for the poverty) with the youth who began his reign with such eclat, Survey iii. 49 ; and *his* predecessor, Euergetes, who degenerated in his old age into "a good-natured but lazy patron of politicians, of priests, and of pedants," with the "old and foolish king," Survey iii. 44. By Koheleth's time the young man, in his turn, could have been succeeded by another and forgotten, as recorded in iii. 54. The history is too scanty to be certain, yet the coincidences are noteworthy. — Koheleth's woe about the boy king is not intended to inveigh against the government so much as against the abuse of feasting and drinking. To feast in the morning is both to waste the valuable part of the day and to spoil one's self for the rest ; while, on the other hand, eating has the practical end of strengthening the

as sanity and prudence in affairs.

Blessed thou, O land, whose king is a son of nobles,
And whose princes feast at fitting time,
In manly strength, and not in revelry.
Through slothfulness the frame sinketh in,
And through drooping of hands the house drippeth.

body for manly use (l. 80), whereas revelry makes it an end in itself. The verse shows clearly how much Epicureanism we can charge against Koheleth in his eating and drinking passages. A similar sentiment against gluttony is touched upon, Survey iii. 99.

78. *A son of nobles;* not the same word which identifies the nobility, with the rich, l. 48, above. There is recognized here, in the son of nobles, the strength and character due to good birth and family; the wisdom of eating and care of self is a part of their *noblesse oblige.*

81. *Through slothfulness;* lit. "double sloth." The literary zest of the maxim is in the association of remote ideas; the framework sinking in with the sloth, the leaky roof with slack hands. It is put in here, probably, as suggested by the thought of the idle roisterers in the palace; a translation, so to say, of the same principle into the dialect of the common man, whose idleness, though it cannot take the form of revelry, none the less may bring a calamity suited to his station.

For mirth they make the feast,
And wine gladdeneth the life,
And money is the answer to it all.
Curse not the king, even in thy thought,
And curse not the rich in thy bedchamber;
For a bird of the heavens will carry forth the sound,

CHAP. x. 19, 20.

83. Another maxim suggested by the topic of feasting, expressing a kind of rough-hewn description of worldly existence. Laughter and good cheer are the off-hand ways of killing time, the external motions of a merry albeit empty life.

85. *And money is the answer to it all;* that is, perhaps, furnishes the means of such luxury, and sets the standard of the life. The maxim sounds like Koheleth's satirical record of an age wherein the moneyed and smart set were setting the pace for sentiment and morals. With this the tone of all his counsel agrees.

86. *Curse not the king;* this maxim throws a light on the general atmosphere of Koheleth's day: it was a time of espionage and treachery, when it was not safe to talk. The wisdom which Koheleth would set up in such circumstances is not even to think evil against the powers that be, but to respect the office if not the man. The same sentiment has come to light in his maxims about obedience, Survey v. 40–50, and about gentleness in the presence of wrath, ll. 41–43, above.

87. *The rich,* as the weighty members of the body politic; compare note to l. 47, above.

And a winged thing will tell the
matter.

90 Cast thy bread upon the waters,
And after many days shalt thou
find it.
Give a portion to seven, yes, to eight,

CHAP. X. 20–XI. 2.

89. *A winged thing;* lit. "a lord of wings," an expression chosen as a parallelistic repeat of the "bird of heaven" in preceding line.

90. *Cast thy bread;* this aphorism, one of the most quoted in the book, is usually read as an inculcation of charity; but the charity it expresses is at best rudimental, not so much charity, indeed, as a kind of business venture. One has to run risks in business, to put forth goods or funds for the sake of uncertain returns. This truth has been hinted in the group of maxims, ll. 51–60, above. Here it is relinquishing what is in hand, and being generous, for the sake of problematical returns, or to guard against evils to come, when one may be left friendless. Jesus uses much the same motive in his parable of the unrighteous steward, Luke xvi. 9; and indeed the Golden Rule is founded on the idea of doing good with an eye to returns. The higher motive of grace and beneficence comes to light more clearly in the New Testament; but this is a genuine start toward it, it is a venture of faith, inculcated in the spirit of practical wisdom. See my little book, *The Passing of Self*, pp. 17–20.

92. *To seven, yes, to eight;* one cannot but recognize that a new note is struck here, the note of faith, of launching out into the realm of free spirit. And this note is kept up. A writer in the London *Spectator* remarks: "Toward the end of the book there is less reasoning and more giving in

For thou knowest not what evil will
be on the earth.
If the clouds be full of rain, they
empty it upon the earth;

CHAP. XI. 2, 3.

to convictions. The writer is mentally tired out. He sees that this ceaseless wondering and anxiety, this living in the presence of death, will tie his hands and make his life absolutely barren. He determines to cease speculating and to turn his face away from his last end. It is the only way, he realizes, to accomplish anything. He begins to 'cast' his 'bread upon the waters,' to work without too much thought of results."

94. This maxim, taken from clouds and trees, is a rather studied truism. The point, in saying a thing so obvious, seems to be: Found your action on obvious cause and effect, on the great simple laws of permanence and common phenomena; in other words, do not refine away your thought and action by indirectness and over-sophistication. Some such lesson as this was certainly the opposite of a truism in Koheleth's whole conduct of life. His book is throughout a plea for making up character for genuineness and permanence. As the clouds empty of their fullness, so character is to come of the full fountain of principle, motive, intrinsic worth. As the tree stays where it falls, so character is to be taken as it can hold out, and so also will destiny be according to its antecedent elements. It is only dimly, however, that this is to be regarded as a pointer toward the Hereafter, if it is at all; it is rather a throb of that eternity in the heart which has already emulated God's work of permanence; see note, Survey ii. 36. — If connection with the preceding maxim is sought, it is perhaps not a forced inter-

And if a tree fall toward the south
or toward the north,
In the place where the tree falleth,
there shall it be.
He that watcheth the wind will not
sow,
And he that eyeth the clouds will not
reap.
As thou knowest not what is the way
of the wind,
Nor the growth of the bones in the
womb of the pregnant,

CHAP. XI. 3–5.

pretation to say: Though casting away bread seems utterly to ignore calculable results, and giving to others likewise, yet perhaps there is enough responsiveness in manhood, or compensation in the universe, so that the return may come as rain from the clouds, and as much to be counted on as the permanent position of the fallen tree. In other words, there may be unworked possibilities in faith, which are yet as certain as laws of nature.

97. *He that watcheth the wind*, that is, as an occupation. The wind will never be quite right, the adjustment never ideal; if you depend absolutely on ideal conditions, you will never do the task. Something must be ventured on uncertainties; it is the part of wisdom. Besides, the conditions which you desiderate are themselves unknown; thou knowest not the way of the wind. You are dealing all the while with unknown powers, which you must take on trust. Jesus uses the wind likewise to illustrate the ignorance of the unspiritual man; see John iii. 8.

So thou knowest not the work of God,
Who yet worketh all.

IV

The solution: work, like the husbandman's,

In the morning sow thy seed,
And at eve slacken not thy hand;

Chap. xi. 5, 6.

101. *So thou knowest not;* the smaller and every day observable things used to point the larger truth. In Survey ii. 27, Koheleth has affirmed an element of eternity in the heart which, however, does not connote knowledge of God's work, beginning or end. In Survey v. 102, he again asserts this ignorance in most absolute terms, as motive for leaving man's works in the hands of God (*ib.* 112), and fleeing from the baffling things to the hope there is in life (l. 129) and the joy of accepted work (ll. 140 sqq.). And now here, in calmer mood, he is getting ready to end the Survey with the same hopeful counsel.

102. *Who yet worketh all;* the very work of which we are so ignorant is all the work there is. Even our own is bound up inseparably with it; compare note, Survey v. 102. There has been no more absolute expression of Koheleth's agnosticism, anywhere in his book, than this.

103. Nor is there anywhere a more sane and beautiful expression of his sturdy wisdom and manhood. The wisdom that he thus sets, as a solution, over against the uncertainties of time and chance, is like the solution with which he confronts the enigmas of fate, Survey iv. 99; only, he met that problem with the fear of God, and this he meets with the practical readiness of faithful work. Wisdom dictates one supreme thing: not, surrender the task on the score of not knowing, but try every chance. The endeavor

In that faith which takes all chances.

For thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that,
Or whether both shall alike be good.

Chap. xi. 6.

may fail, but then too it may succeed; one is as likely as the other. Cast your effort on the side of faith, of success, of life and growth; and be diligent morning and evening; and hope. One is reminded of Tennyson's *Ancient Sage:*

> "For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
> Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
> Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!"

So in this Survey on "Wisdom Encountering Time and Chance," Koheleth, beginning with the utter dominance of chance, like a trap set for men, finds first, to offset it, a power of wisdom working unperceived in emergencies, the power of considered and well-directed work; then applying that wisdom, through tact, through practical headwork, through timeliness, through gracious and chosen words; rising from this to temperate and steady industry, then to discretion in thought and word, he ends with that wise venturesomeness, expressed in generosity and beneficence, which is the next thing to faith, — nay, which as applied to the unknown works of God, on whose world we are absolutely dependent, becomes a real forthputting of faith, in reliance on the uniformity of nature. It is still practical wisdom, moving in the world of law, and looking out keenly on this side and that; but it has reached the frontier of the continent of love. There is only a door to open, a current of grace to unstop; so that the manhood being, hungry for more life, may overflow its old bounds into a kingdom of grace and truth.

THE SEVENTH SURVEY

REJOICE, AND REMEMBER

YES: the light is sweet,
And good it is for the eyes to see the sun;
For if a man live many years,

The whole counsel proposed.

CHAP. XI. 7, 8.

As has been noted, the Surveys thus far have been made up of two essential elements: observation or experience, and counsel founded thereon. Thus in a rudimental way the body of thought has proceeded in the way of induction of facts and conclusion. As it has advanced, however, the proportion of observed fact has decreased and the proportion of counsel augmented, until the thought, which in the First Survey had a great predominance of fact and experience, has in this Seventh Survey become almost entirely counsel. And as each Survey has been conducted to a closing stage which gave the counsel suited to that Survey in brief, the present Survey may be regarded as the comprehensive counsel suited to the whole book.

LINE 1. *The light . . . the sun;* the sources and suggestions of joy here given are like a recourse to first principles, or to primal comforts as instinctive as those of the animals; as if Koheleth would direct man, after all his searchings and surveyings, to the simple environment that surrounds every man. It is not in heaven, neither is it beyond the sea, but very nigh thee; see Deut. xxx. 11–14.

Let him rejoice in them all;
Yet let him remember the days of darkness,
For many shall they be, —
All that cometh is vanity.

CHAP. XI. 8.

4. *Let him rejoice in them all;* this includes every period of life, old age as well as youth. Joy is to be cherished as a present possession, not postponed nor merely recalled. Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* takes up this same strain of cheer and hope: —

> "Our times are in his hand
> Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!'"

The first half of this stanza has been quoted to illustrate Survey iv. 47.

5. *Yet let him remember;* both here and in l. 16, below, the word *remember* seems to be used for future things as well as for past; to include not merely recalling but reflecting or pondering. While joy is as it were the spirit's energy and motive power, reflection, memory, is the balance-wheel and governor. Memory tempers joy, not so as to impair, but so as to make it deep-founded and solid. A joy that has discounted contingencies is not the prey of fate or chance or evil conscience; its fibre is the more sterling for its recognized obverse of shadow and sorrow.

> "Poor vaunt of life indeed,
> Were man but formed to feed
> On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
> Such feasting ended, then
> As sure an end to men;
> Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?"

7. *All that cometh is vanity;* if for no other reason, *because*

I

REJOICE, O young man, in thy youth,

Joy and the forward look for young manhood.

CHAP. XI. 9.

it is not yet ; until it comes, it is an unreality, therefore not to count as a determinator of mood and motive. But also, as experience has abundantly shown (compare Survey i. 9, 66), when it has come to pass, has become an accomplished fact, it is just as truly a vanity. The only reality to be counted and built upon is the present moment of joyful achievement (compare Survey i. 60, and note); anything that we approach by "remembering" is unreal. Joy feeds on the present ; memory on what no longer is, except as lesson or warning.

8–15. This section, giving a detailed picture of the wise joy of youth, is apparently intended to be set as a foil or contrast over against the description of the encroaching infirmities of age, in the next section. The style of the two sections, with their lists of details beginning with "and," would suggest that they are given as companion pieces. A notable distinction is that this section, as accordant with the practical realities of life, is literal, while the next section, as dealing with the fancies of memory, is expressed in imagery.

8. *In thy youth ;* this morning period of life is chosen as the fit period for rejoicing, not merely for the age (it is indeed "vanity" like the rest, l. 15), but because life is then at the full tide, with all functions in normal and vigorous play. This idea is reinforced by the parallel synonym, "young manhood," which refers to the prime, what Browning calls "our manhood's prime vigor." Rejoice, Koheleth

And let thy heart cheer thee in the
days of thy young manhood;
And walk thou in the ways of thy
10 heart,
And in the sight of thine eyes;

CHAP. XI. 9.

says, in this. The counsel is nearly equivalent to, rejoice in the healthy fullness of life. We might parallel it by Browning's exclamation in *Saul*: —

> "How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
> All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!"

10. *The ways of thy heart . . . the sight of thine eyes;* as Stevenson puts it: "All that is in the man in the larger sense, what we call impression as well as what we call intuition, . . . we must accept." Koheleth commits himself fearlessly to the healthy play of young manhood; virtually saying that in the bounding tides of youthful life, with its fresh enthusiastic abandon, there is a goodness, a beauty, a soundness, which we are bound to respect. This was written, it will be remembered, in an age wherein the Mosaic law was accepted in its austerest expression, and wherein theories of total depravity held the field in men's theology. Nor does Koheleth deny the strain of evil in human nature; see Survey v. 4, and note. Even we of later days are so imbued with the idea of innate depravity that the counsel here given sounds hazardous. It is given in good faith and unconditionally, however; it accords with Koheleth's free attitude toward the law, which, as we have seen (compare Survey iv. 93–98, note), he construes liberally in conduct. It is one of the results of his looking upon life not as a theologian, but as a scientific and practical observer.

And know that for all these God will
bring thee into judgment;
And remove sorrow from thy heart,

CHAP. XI. 9, 10.

12. *Into judgment;* in our prevailing assumption that young men left to themselves will go to the bad, we read this clause as a threat; as if Koheleth had said, Have your fling, young man, but look out for disagreeable consequences. Some expositors have indeed belittled, not to say soiled, this whole passage unspeakably. It is an assumption, however, to suppose that Koheleth would have his young man look forward to judgment as if he were a culprit or a trimmer. All the body of his counsel goes rather toward self-respecting, self-justifying manhood. And in common with right-minded Hebrews he looks upon coming judgment as a refuge and revelation (see Survey ii. 49; compare Psalms vii. 8; xxvi. 1), when the true assessment of life shall be made, and when man can appeal to God for having walked in his integrity. Judgment, to the Hebrew mind, was a thing fervently longed for. If men presumed on delay of judgment, it was because their hearts were full-set to do evil (Survey v. 74); but it is not to such men, it is rather to men rejoicing in the fullness of their manhood, that the present counsel is directed. Such men need have no fear of the "true appraisal" (Survey v. 18) which judgment will bring; they will seek rather to anticipate it in good sense and wisdom.

13. *Remove sorrow . . . put away evil;* both the heart and the flesh, the inner and the outer man, to be kept clean and normal. This is the form that the counsel of life takes in Koheleth's scientific view of things, corresponding to what in religious dialect would be called being cleansed from sin.

And put away evil from thy flesh;
For youth and the morn of life are
15 vanity.

II

Memory to temper joy

REMEMBER also thy Creator, in the
days of thy young manhood,

CHAP. XI. 10, XII. 1.

It is to be noted that sorrow is to the heart what evil is to the flesh, an alien element, a kind of poison, to be purged away so that the real manhood may have free course. It is as much a duty to be joyful as it is to be pure. — Koheleth seems to have in mind, as regards the implication of this buoyant young manhood, some such thought as is expressed by Stevenson: "Every bit of brisk living, and above all if it be healthful, is just so much gained upon the wholesale filcher, death." Hence the setting of youth over against the dreariness and decrepitude of old age.

15. *Are vanity;* that is, as a period of existence, youth and the morn of life are no more in themselves than is old age ("all that cometh," l. 7). The youth season is just the glorious opportunity, when manhood's pulse beats strongest and truest, to snatch joy from the shadow of vanity and gain the good that is not vain.

16. *Remember also thy Creator;* of the section here beginning, ll. 16–42, this is the one positive precept of counsel; all the rest, beginning with "ere yet," being its setting. Remembering the Creator is about what we call reverence; see note l. 5, above. It has already been virtually inculcated in connection with the Temple service; see Survey iii. 60, 62, and notes. Reverence is not to be regarded as an aus-

Ere yet the evil days are come, while yet the days are fair.
Or drawn nigh the years when thou shalt say,

terity to check and chill joy, but a thoughtful wisdom, to deepen and temper it.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell."

Reverence coupled with joy, the spontaneous movement of the soul upward to its source and outward to its environment, and all this in the fullness of manhood, while life's path is still ascending, — this is Koheleth's bravely won ideal. And men call him a pessimist!

17. *Ere yet the evil days are come;* that is to say, remember your Creator before you are driven to it as a sanctuary or last resource; remember Him as the Creator and source of health and joy while everything breathes of full-orbed life, rather than as the Author of decay and decrepitude. A notable feature of this detailed description of the evil days is that they are contemplated as not present but on the way; anticipated and analyzed, as it were, from a station of joy and reverence. The soul is bidden look over into them from another region and make the most of its contrasted present. It is the forewarned, forearmed condition; as if Koheleth intended to say, Do not tumble helplessly into old age weakness and welter there with no wisdom to offset it; store up wisdom beforehand, so as to go through that period with eyes and heart open. Then when the evil days come, you can feel you have assessed them; they are no surprise, no disintegrator of faith. And meanwhile associate your Creator with what is strongest and manliest; let Him share in your highest powers. — The implication of

"No pleasure in them for me."
Ere yet are darkened the sun and the
20 light, the moon and the stars,
And the clouds return after the
rain; —

this passage, as connected with the preceding, is similar to that of Survey v. 151. As in that place it says, Work, for there is no ability to work in the grave, so here it says, Remember thy Creator, for there is no pleasure of memory from a consciousness of feebleness and decay. One is reminded also of the "old and foolish king," in Survey iii. 44, who is going down from wisdom and "knoweth not how to take admonition any more." In all these Koheleth's thought is, Take life on the up-grade.

20–42. Here begins a series of poetic pictures which has been a favorite pasture-ground for the allegorists, who have sought to conform them all to some one figurative situation. A variety of analogies have been suggested; the two principal ones being, that here is described the oncoming of a storm, with its various perturbations so much greater in the East, where storms are rare, than with us; and that here is described, in a kind of story, the progressive decay coming upon the bodily members. The latter is the more likely one, if a single basis of imagery is sought; but the effect of crowding each detail into one preconceived picture is to force and belittle the idea. If we read the passage rather as a collection of the natural images of oncoming feebleness and decay, and think of each as an independent metaphor, rather than as a constituent of a larger allegory, the portrayal will yield more dignity as well as significance.

20. The suggestiveness of darkening light and returning

In the day when the keepers of the
house tremble,
And the men of might bow themselves,
And the grinders cease because they
are few,
And they that look out of the windows are darkened,
And closed are the doors to the street;

clouds is obvious enough without supposing a thunderstorm to support them.

22. *The keepers of the house;* those on whom the house depends for work and defense; the hands and arms, if one must have recourse to allegory.

23. *The men of might;* identifiable in the allegory with the legs.

24. *The grinders* were important in an Eastern house, where all the grain is ground by hand on the premises; on them depended, therefore, in large part the sustenance and nourishment of the household. To say these denote the teeth, which become fewer with age, is natural enough, but a certain largeness is taken from the idea, which serves its poetic purpose apart from such limitation.

25. *They that look out of the windows;* the women at an Eastern lattice, whose presence is such a sign of life and interest (compare Judges v. 28; Proverbs vii. 6). In the body this would mean, of course, the eyes.

26. *The doors to the street*, through which communication is made to and from the world; allegorically, the senses in general.

When the sound of the mill groweth faint,
And he riseth at the voice of the sparrow,
And all the daughters of song are brought low,
And they are afraid of that which is high,
And terrors are in the way,
And the almond-tree beareth its blossoms,

CHAP. XII. 4, 5.

27. *The sound of the mill* is the most constant indication of activity in an Eastern house, an audible sign that the work and functions of the household are in fullness and order; its gradual cessation, then, would figure the cessation of the bodily functions.

28. When one is old and sleep is lighter, the first bird-voice of the morning is sufficient to waken him. This seems the most fitting interpretation of this clause; to make it refer to the piping voice of old age is needlessly to belittle the figure.

29. *The daughters of song* may mean either the women of the household happy and vocal at their work, or the tones of the voice growing weak and unsure. In either case it symbolizes the decay of the finer functions.

30. A characteristic of old age is to dread standing on high places, and to be cautious of dangers and disturbances.

32. The almond-tree, with its abundant white blossoms, is a figure of the white hairs of old age.

And the grasshopper draggeth itself
wearily,
And the caper-berry faileth;
Because man goeth to his eternal
home,
And the mourners go about the
streets.
Ere yet the silver cord is sundered,
And the golden bowl is broken,
And the pitcher shattered at the
fountain,
And the wheel broken at the cistern;

CHAP. XII. 5, 6.

33. The figure of the grasshopper is obscure; but it may be intended as a descriptive picture of the halting, ungraceful walk, or hitch, of the "shrunk shank" of age.

34. The caper-berry, with its pungent, peppery taste, is an appetizer; when it fails to stimulate, therefore, relish is well-nigh gone.

36. *The mourners* are the hired professional mourners of an Eastern town; compare the flute-players of Matthew ix. 23.

37–40. All these are speaking and beautiful figures of the break-up of the bodily life; and nothing is added to their beauty or significance, and certainly nothing to their dignity, by identifying them with the spinal cord, the skull, the lungs, the heart, or whatever they may be thought to figure. It is better to leave them in the large suggestiveness of metaphors, than to press them into details of an allegory.

And the dust return to earth as it was,
And the spirit return to God who gave it.

CHAP. XII. 7.

41. *And the dust return;* this is the destiny that Koheleth has all the while had in mind, the long poetic description serving to accentuate it; see Survey ii. 60.

42. *To God who gave it;* this is all Koheleth trusts himself to say; but he leaves the spirit in the same keeping wherein it has ever been. The rest there is no one to tell.

. . . . . .

Thus through these seven Surveys, wherein he has deeply probed the turbid lot and labor of man, Koheleth has conducted his steady uncompromising induction to a supreme earthly goal; directing us on the one side to the vigor and health of young manhood, in which he bids us rejoice; and on the other to the last feeble runnings of decaying old age, in view of which he bids us, with the spirit of youth still strong in us, remember Him who created all. The whole book, from its first note of vanity to this last leave-taking of earth, is conceived in one supreme idea, one homogeneous conviction. What this is, let these few words sum up: —

LIFE IS AN ULTIMATE FACT. IT HAS NO EQUIVALENT; IT WILL ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTE. IN WHATEVER ALLOTMENT OF WORK AND WAGE; IN WHATEVER EXPERIENCE OF EASE OR HARDSHIP; IN WHATEVER SEEN OR UNSEEN RANGE OF BEING; LIFE, UTTERLY REFUSING TO BE MEASURED BY ANYTHING ELSE, MUST BE ITS OWN REWARD AND BLESSEDNESS, OR NOTHING.

Such, translated from the idiom of his day and nation into ours, is Koheleth's undying message to the ages.

EPILOGUE

THE NAIL FASTENED

VANITY of vanities, saith Koheleth, all is vanity. **The concession of vanity holds as ever.**

AND further, since Koheleth was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; and he composed, and com- **Koheleth's ideal of instruction and authorship.**

CHAP. XII. 8, 9.

The title of this Epilogue, it will be noted, is chosen from the phrase in line 11, which describes the literary utility of a course of thoughts like this.

LINE 1. *Vanity of vanities;* the exclamation is appended to the whole body of Koheleth's thought, making it end where it began; in token that, whatever compensation or surplusage is found in the life of the soul, the same old vanity remains, the creature made subject to vanity. It is the mark of the worldly environment in which his era is imprisoned.

4. *He still taught;* we get here a glimpse of the class of Hebrew sages who in an unofficial and disinterested way enlightened the people in sane thinking. Their function, as a class, in the nation seems to be recognized in Jeremiah xviii. 18.

5. *Composed, and compiled, and arranged;* one of the very few passages in the whole scripture wherein an author speaks

piled, and arranged many lessons. Koheleth sought to find words of pleasantness; and what was written was upright, words of truth.

CHAP. XII. 10.

of his literary methods. It would seem from this that by Koheleth's time the sage, who in earlier days had instructed orally (compare Job xxix. 7–10), had become a kind of professional maker of books. Such, at least, was Koheleth, according to his own account; and in this passage he mentions the three methods he employed. We have what seem to be traces of all these in the book before us. The maxims which he inserts from the collection he has compiled are sometimes, as we have seen (compare note, Survey vi. 31), imperfectly joined to the rest; they show the joints and cement of insertion. Of the composed maxims, I should judge Survey i. 22, and this Epilogue, ll. 15–17, to be good specimens. The treatment on which he prides himself most, however, as would appear from ll. 11, 12 (see note there), is the arranging of his utterances into a continuous and homogeneous collection or body of thought. This and the inductive method (see Introductory Study, pp. 176 sqq.) are his special contribution to the forms of the Wisdom literature.

6. *Many lessons;* lit. "proverbs" (*m'shalim*). This was the name given to the utterances of Wisdom, because from the beginning they were expressed in sententious form, embodying an antithesis, or a parallelism, or a similitude, which said much in few and condensed words. Thus the *mashal*, or proverb, became the distinctive term for Wisdom lessons; the word *lesson*, however, seems to me more closely to express what it came to mean.

7–9. In these lines Koheleth gives his sense of what

Words of the wise are like goads ; 10
but like well-driven nails, rather, are
the heads of collections, given from
one shepherd. And for what is more

literary quality he would impress on his subject-matter. First, the words should give pleasure in the reading, be attractive in style. Secondly, they should be sincere, giving the truth according to conviction and reality. Beauty of form must not be used to conceal a thought not fully verified. This latter was evidently a cardinal point with him ; he was conscious, doubtless, of holding a view of truth which, as it would be at variance with his age's sentiment, must be the fruit of honest and seasoned conviction.

10–12. Two similes here give the effect of two different forms of *mashal* literature. Professor Paul Haupt (*Oriental Studies*, p. 277) thus explains them : "An isolated maxim, a single proverb, is like the point of an ox-goad ; it pricks one particular spot for a moment, urging on and stimulating, but has no lasting effect. Sayings, however, which are systematically arranged in a special collection forming a connected whole are as impressive as nails firmly driven in. They infix themselves for ever in your memory, just as firmly as nails driven into a board or the like ; they have a firm hold on you."

12. *Heads of collections ;* lit. "lords" or "masters." The phrase seems to refer to the sayings which are used as topic-sentences to indicate the general trend or subject of a section or paragraph at the head of which they stand. Such sayings do not stand isolated ; there is a connected body of sayings flowing from them. Instances of this may be seen, Survey ii. 1; v. 1, 35.

13. *One shepherd ;* Koheleth's figure for the writer who

than these, my son, be admonished:
15 of making many books there is no
end; and much study is a weariness
of the flesh.

THE end of the matter; this heard,

CHAP. XII. 12, 13.

gathers the separate maxims into one body of thought. The fact that they are fused in one mind, marshaled by a person who is concerned with one correlated body of thought, as a shepherd collects his sheep in one flock, is an element in their power. This, it will be remembered, is the first attempt to describe a philosophy composed otherwise than in detached maxims, as in the Book of Proverbs. The description is somewhat clumsily made, and Koheleth has to coin his own terms and figures for it; but it is very suggestive.

15. *Of making many books;* it would seem from this that the new wave of philosophic thought in Koheleth's time had stimulated literary activity, and given rise to many books for the most part vapid and ephemeral. Koheleth's mention of them accords with his irritation at the abundance of foolish words; he is aware how ill-founded and superficial they are. One or two truths well mastered will save the necessity of wading through so much to so little purpose.

16. *Much study is a weariness;* the implication is that the problem of life may be studied too curiously and too dubiously, as if it were a remote mystery; whereas the essentials of it are much nearer the surface. "The word is nigh thee." He is steering toward the end of the whole matter, which heard, all is heard. Beyond this all that study yields is weariness.

18. *This heard;* I have added this preliminary phrase to

all is heard: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the sum of manhood. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

The soul's station at the centre of manhood, ready for judgment.

emphasize rightly the force of the clause; it is literally, "all is heard."

19. *Fear God, and keep His commandments;* no other precept could better sum up the whole course of Koheleth's counsel; consider what a part the fear of God plays, see note, Survey iv. 101. So far from being a pious addition to save the orthodoxy, as some have been pleased to conjecture, it is homogeneous with both the letter and the spirit of the whole book.

20. *The sum of manhood;* lit. "the whole of man." This gives it for Koheleth's era of legalism, and for the data of life which he could see. Nor is it inadequate for any dispensation; it simply gives the pre-Christian ideal of manhood, before the fullness of adult manhood, with its immortal outlook, had come to light. And it is noble and strong.

22. *Into judgment;* this last assertion has been much questioned, as if it were not in the strain of Koheleth's agnostic and truculent mood. But judgment to come is one of his prevailing ideas; see note, Survey vii. 12. His faith in the light which, though he sees it not, yet he knows is sure to come, takes the form of a belief in judgment, when things will be revealed as they are.

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